

Saleh returns home from Egypt, UAE

SANAA (AP) — President Ali Abdullah Saleh returned Saturday from Egypt and the United Arab Emirates, where he lobbied for support against his estranged vice-president, Ali Salem Al Beidh. Meanwhile, Mr. Beidh and his top aide, Salem Saleh Mohammad, have been visiting Saudi Arabia and Kuwait to solicit support for their cause of secession from the Republic of Yemen. The shaky 1990 union of Mr. Beidh's South Yemen and Mr. Saleh's North Yemen came to a head last month with clashes between northern and southern troops. Mr. Saleh has been trying to woo back conservative Gulf Arab states which were his main supporters until Sanaa alienated them with its support for Iraq. Mr. Beidh, who has been calling for secession from Sanaa in favour of a federation, has been trying to score points with wealthy Gulf countries by reminding them of Aden's anti-Iraqi stand during the 1990 Gulf crisis. In Abu Dhabi, Mr. Saleh held a three-hour meeting with President Sheikh Zayed Ben Sultan Al Nahayan. He told the official Emirates News Agency (WAM) that his talks dealt with Sheikh Zayed's standing call for restoration of Arab solidarity.

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Syria incensed by France-Israel deal

DAMASCUS (AP) — Syria chastised France Saturday for ignoring Arab sentiment to conclude a military cooperation accord with Israel hard on the heels of the Feb. 25 mosque massacre in the Israeli-occupied West Bank. In a front-page editorial, the government's leading newspaper, Tishrin, said France's action "does not only threaten the peace process, but also the security of the Palestinian people and the Arabs at large." French Defence Minister Francois Leotard ratified the military cooperation agreement in Israel Thursday. Tishrin said the new military agreement "poses a blatant deviation from the traditional policy adopted by (Charles) de Gaulle and an abject encouragement for Israel to commit more aggressive acts." This "turnabout," added the paper, pointed to French "involvement in a hostile campaign against the Arabs."

Bombay police detain 2,700

BOMBAY (AP) — Police held more than 2,700 people in custody Saturday, the anniversary of Bombay bombings which killed 257 people. "This had to be done as a precautionary measure," to prevent any sectarian violence. Joint commissioner of Police O.P. Bali said Saturday. Police blamed the March 12, 1993, blasts on Muslim radicals who, police say, were taking revenge after Hindu zealots demolished a mosque in the central Indian town of Ayodhya. The 13 blasts, one of which crippled India's largest stock market, injured 700 people and rocked Bombay. Most of the people taken into custody in the past 10 days are listed by police as habitual offenders. Mr. Bali did not say when they would be released.

Bhutto vows to defend women's rights

ISLAMABAD (AP) — Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto on Saturday visited a hospitalised woman who suffered a brutal assault and then called for a crusade to end domestic violence against women. The victim, Zainab Sharif, says her husband tied her up and placed a red-hot iron in her vagina. She is suffering from numerous internal injuries and may not survive, according to doctors at Rawalpindi general hospital, near Islamabad. Her husband Masud Hafeez Sharif has been jailed. Before the case was publicised in recent days, he was a highly respected prayer leader in the Chakwal district, about 150 kilometres northwest of Islamabad. "Being a woman prime minister, I cannot tolerate degradation and inhuman treatment of women," Ms. Bhutto said after visiting with Zainab. "No one will be able to get away with violence against women on the pretext that it is a domestic matter."

Iran speaker slams human rights report

NICOSIA (R) — Iran's parliament speaker on Saturday slammed a United Nations report accusing Iran of human rights violations as an attempt to deflect attention from rallies dedicated to protesting against Israel. Iran's IRNA agency, reporting a parliament speech, said Ali Akbar Nateq-Nouri accused human rights groups of ignoring the Hebron massacre. "Referring to recent claims by the U.N. Human Rights Commission that there were human rights violations in Iran, Nateq-Nouri said the global arrogance (the West) renewed its accusations against Iran in an attempt to overshadow the international Qods Day." IRNA said the speaker praised attendance at demonstrations in Iran on Friday to mark the Jerusalem Day, the last Friday of the Holy Month of Ramadan dedicated to protest against the Jewish state by Iran's late revolutionary leader Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini.

PLO ready to resume talks, if U.S., Russia back U.N. move

TUNIS (Agencies) — The Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) said on Saturday it was ready to resume talks with Israel once the United States and Russia back up a U.N. resolution condemning the Hebron massacre and ensuring the security of Palestinians in the occupied territories.

The U.N. Security Council is expected to vote on the resolution on Monday.

A draft calls for measures to "guarantee the safety and protection of the Palestinian civilians throughout the occupied territory, including... a temporary international or foreign presence, which was provided for in the declaration of principles" signed by Israel and the PLO last September.

The United States and Russia are asked to "continue their efforts to invigorate the peace process, and to undertake the necessary support for the implementation," of the measures.

PLO Executive Committee member Mahmoud Abbas told Reuters on Saturday that peace talks with Israel could be resumed "once the resolution is adopted and the co-sponsors pledge to guarantee Palestinians' security."

The PLO and Arab countries suspended talks with Israel after a Jewish settler massacred about 60 Palestinians in a mosque in the West Bank town of Hebron on Feb. 25.

Israel's withdrawal from Jericho and the Gaza Strip and the start of limited Palestinian self-rule there under the September accord have been further delayed by the killings.

Mr. Abbas signed the PLO-Israel accord with Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres on September 13 in Washington.

He said the PLO expects that U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher and Russian Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev would address the issue of guarantees and mechanisms for implementation of the U.N. resolution when they meet on Monday.

Mr. Kozyrev said after meeting PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat in Tunis on Friday night that the PLO leader had expressed his commitment to resuming peace talks with Israel. "I am very pleased to announce that PLO leader Yasser Arafat took a great and courageous decision," Mr. Kozyrev told journalists.

Mr. Kozyrev said the PLO was relying on the proposed Security Council resolution and on guarantees by the co-sponsors, the United States and Russia, that it would be implemented.

But Mr. Arafat standing beside Mr. Kozyrev, added the PLO was awaiting guarantees from the U.N. Security Council, firmly backed by Washington and Moscow, for the security of Palestinians in the Israeli-occupied territories.

"I have informed Mr. Kozyrev in the name of my colleagues (in the PLO leadership) that the PLO is committed to the peace process, despite the Hebron massacre and tragedy," he said.

"But we are looking for guarantees for the security of our people from the co-sponsors of the peace process," he said.

In New York, the resolution, sponsored by Djibouti as coordinator of the council's non-aligned members, together with Britain, France, Spain and Russia, was formally circulated and council President Jean-Bernard Mermet of France said he expected a vote on Monday.

Mr. Kozyrev, who earlier on Friday met Israeli officials in Tel Aviv, said he would meet Mr. Christopher on Monday.

He said Mr. Arafat had accepted an invitation from Russian President Boris Yeltsin to visit Moscow.

Mr. Kozyrev said the idea of a fresh Madrid-style Middle East peace conference floated by Russian officials — and rejected by Israel — was not for the immediate future.

"The Madrid conference is an option which is open. We have to concentrate now on immediate things on how to save the peace process," he said.

Palestinian sources said earlier Friday in Tunis that Mr.

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Hebron relatively subdued

HEBRON, Occupied West Bank (AP) — Scattered rain showers and army curfews kept most Palestinians indoors Saturday, calming violence in this hotbed in the occupied territories for the first time in 16 days since the mosque massacre.

Some unrest was reported in the Gaza Strip. The body of a slain Palestinian was left at his family's doorstep in Gaza City's Rimal quarter, with a note signed by Hamas, alleging that the victim collaborated with Israel.

Victim Hamis Hamida, 25, had been kidnapped by masked activists on Friday, Arab reports said. He was the 812th alleged collaborator killed in the six-year Palestinian uprising.

Most of Hebron's 100,000 residents were kept indoors for a 16th day by a continued curfew imposed to prevent revenge attacks against Israelis in the wake of the mosque massacre.

Curfew restrictions also were imposed on the city of Ramallah, north of Jerusalem, after clashes there Friday night.

Probe unveils Israeli army's double standards for Jews, Arabs

TEL AVIV (AP) — The inquiry into the Hebron massacre is exposing sloppy army practices, double standards for Jews and Arabs and the high moral cost of using the military to police another people.

Israelis have seen officers at a loss for words to explain lax security at the mosque where Jewish settler Baruch Goldstein killed at least 60 Palestinian worshippers two weeks ago.

Officers contradicted themselves and each other. They passed the buck when pressed by the five-member panel, appointed by the government, about the logic of orders that appeared to afford Palestinians little if any protection from settler violence.

Testimony revealed that surveillance cameras had malfunctioned, half the 10-man guard contingent was absent during the massacre and commanders were unsure about how to interpret regulations that forbid soldiers to open fire on settlers.

Reaction has ranged from anger at the airing of such matters to relief that the uncomfortable realities of occupation were being exposed to a public often ignorant of events in the occupied territories.

The whole inquiry is a fiasco," said Aharon Levran, a reserve general and military researcher at Bar Ilan University in Tel Aviv. "They will expose more and more. We are already a nation without consensus and it will only get worse."

Mr. Levran said the prospect of "army officers and security-service agents blaming each other and arguing in public will not do us any good."

The army and establishment have been examined before by inquiry commissions, whose recommendations are not binding but usually acted upon.

Twenty years ago, a commission found top officials to blame for Israel's lack of readiness for the 1973 war. Defence Minister Moshe Dayan resigned.

A 1983 inquiry into the massacre of hundreds of Palestinians in the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps in Beirut after Israel's invasion led to the removal of Ariel Sharon as defence minister.

This inquiry, the first to be broadcast live, has exposed "an unprecedented chain of failures, lack of discipline, negligence and mistakes" by

the army, said the respected daily Haaretz.

Other observers say decades of government policy in the territory is on trial along with military competence.

Commentator Nahum Barnea wrote of "27 years of distortions borne of occupation coming out. The more the inquiry widens, the more it exposes the modus operandi of Israel in the territories (to be) against international law and not up to many Israelis' expectations from their government and army."

There was an uproar after testimony Thursday by Meir Tayar, commander of the paramilitary border police who help guard the Ibrahimi Mosque, where the massacre took place.

Three of Mr. Tayar's men were so late for duty that they did not arrive until after the massacre, but he said they could not have acted against Goldstein even if they had been on duty.

He said regulations forbid soldiers to fire at a Jew, even if the Jew is killing Arabs. Soldiers confronted with a Jewish gunman are to "take cover and wait for the clip to finish, then

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America's top soldier flies into Mogadishu

MOGADISHU (Agencies) — The United States' top soldier flew into a still-dangerous Mogadishu on Saturday to say thank you to the last of his troops to pull out of the Somalia rescue mission.

The chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General John Shalikashvili, arrived at the United Nations-controlled airport amid tight security which underlined how perilous the Somali capital still is 15 months after U.S. troops first arrived.

U.S. helicopter gunships clattered over the bombed-out city and tanks guarded the entrance to the dusty airfield.

U.S. Marines and Egyptian soldiers in sandbagged posts around the runway perimeter scanned houses from which they are shot at daily.

Bandits on Saturday seized New Zealander Wayne Hargrave and Kenyan John Wajuh from their vehicle in the capital.

A U.N. spokesman said the disappearance of the two, who work for a catering firm feeding U.N. personnel, was not yet being treated as a kidnapping.

Gen. Shalikashvili, dressed in combat uniform, saluted his commanders lined up on the

runway and then was whisked away in an armed convoy. "It's to give the troops a send-off," U.S. Colonel Steve Rausch.

The general, making his second trip to Somalia this year, will spend 24 hours meeting U.S. troops camped out in the sand dunes on the edge of the airport. All will be gone by March 25.

He will also review sailors and Marines on the Peleliu sitting off the coast.

Washington officials and the nation at large were not sensitive enough to the fact that humanitarian peacekeeping missions also carry risks, when the Somalia mission changed from a humanitarian one to bloody clashes with local factions, Gen. Shalikashvili said Friday en route to Somalia.

"In this particular case, human nature being what it might be, perhaps we didn't have that printed firmly enough on our foreheads as this was occurring," he told reporters aboard his airplane.

"First and foremost, you must carry away the lesson that those missions sometimes carry very grave risks," he said.

Only certainty is violence, page 10

Pro-Israeli gunmen kill 2 resistance men

MARIJAYOUN (Agencies) — Israeli-backed militiamen killed two Palestinian guerrilla infiltrators in a shootout Saturday on the snow-blanketed foothills of Mount Hermon in South Lebanon, security sources said.

A third guerrilla was captured by militiamen of the South Lebanon Army (SLA) and a fourth surrendered to Norwegian soldiers of a U.N. peacekeeping force, said the sources.

Both survivors were wounded, said the sources, who could not be named in line with standing regulations.

In Israel, the army confirmed the clash and the casualties. Army sources said an Israeli ski resort on Mount Hermon was closed to the public while soldiers searched the area to make sure no guerrillas had slipped into Israeli territory.

The Lebanese security sources said the guerrillas belonged to the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command (PFLP-GC), a group based in Damascus and headed by former Syrian army captain Ahmad Jibril.

Using infiltration trails behind Syrian army lines in east

Lebanon's Bekaa Valley, the guerrillas slipped into the eastern sector of Israel's self-proclaimed "security zone," the sources said.

The first two infiltrators were spotted by the SLA militiamen at 9 p.m. (1900 GMT) Friday near the village of Kfar Shuba. One was captured by the SLA and the other surrendered to Norwegian troops at a nearby position. He was later handed over to the Lebanese army.

A second squad, apparently dispatched to rescue the captives, was intercepted at 7:40 a.m. (0540 GMT) Saturday near Chebaa, five kilometres southwest of Kfar Shuba. After a firefight, the bodies of two guerrillas were found lying on the battleground.

The guerrillas were armed with AK-47 assault rifles and each carried a number of hand and rocket-propelled grenades, according to reporters who were allowed to see the blood-stained bodies before they were removed.

The Damascus-based Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP) said in a statement in Beirut that its guerrillas had succeeded in

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Ramadan shoppers in the Jabal Hussein neighbourhood of Amman (Photo by Rana Hussein)

Muslim World celebrates 'Eid Al Fitr feast today

AMMAN (J.T.) — Jordan, along with the rest of the Muslim World, Sunday begins the 'Eid Al Fitr feast, but celebrations in the Kingdom are subdued following the Feb. 25 massacre at a mosque in the occupied West Bank town of Hebron.

The Kingdom is observing a four-day 'Eid holiday that began Saturday. The country will go back to work on Wednesday.

All essential departments, such as the postal services, civil defence, security forces and hospitals, will remain functional throughout the holiday.

Saudi Arabia, Kuwait,

Bahrain, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates announced overnight that a three-day 'Eid Al Fitr holiday would start on Sunday.

The official news agencies of the five states said that Saturday will be the last day of the fasting month of Ramadan.

Religious authorities and members of the public had been asked to look out for the new moon on Friday evening. Failure to observe it then meant that Saturday, the 30th day of the lunar month, would by law be the last.

Francis Cardinal Arinze, president of the Vatican-based committee for interfaith dialogue issued a state-

ment Saturday wishing all Muslims a happy 'Eid Al Fitr.

"As believers in God, the Merciful and Compassionate, who cares for the weak and the downtrodden, let us pledge to work together to uphold family life," the message said. "We could foster increased contacts between Christians and Muslims to exchange on family values. As members of the one human family, we could work in solidarity to help those in need. In so doing we would be giving a human expression to divine compassion. Let us pray that God may assist us in this task, for nothing is impossible for the one who trusts in God."

Rockets hit Kabul during 'Eid shopping

KABUL (AP) — Rockets slammed into a busy market in central Kabul on Saturday as residents were shopping for one of the biggest Muslim holidays.

At least three civilians were killed and 22 wounded, according to Dr. Salamat Omer at the nearby Jambouriat Hospital.

The rival factions have continued their battle for Kabul throughout the Holy Month of Ramadan. Many residents braved the latest shelling to shop for the three-day 'Eid Al Fitr holiday, which is to begin Sunday following the end of Ramadan.

Several of the victims were hit on Chicken Street, a market favoured by wealthy Kabul residents and foreigners because it stocks imported goods and has numerous carpet and antique shops.

The artillery attacks have become a daily feature of life in Kabul for the past 10 weeks. Renegade Prime Minister Gulbuddin Hekmatyar and his ally, warlord Rashid Dostum, have been pounding the city with rockets since they launched a Jan. 1 assault to oust president Burhanuddin Rabbani. The president's forces still control most of Kabul, but the city has been devastated.

In Saturday's attack, it appeared the rockets were coming from positions controlled by Mr. Hekmatyar and General Dostum on the southern edge of the city.

Mr. Rabbani's national security headquarters are near Chicken Street and may have been the target. However, the factions are notoriously inaccurate with their artillery fire and the vast majority of the casualties are civilians.

"Hekmatyar is trying to frighten people by these rocket attacks," said Najibullah, an assistant to Ahmad Shah Masoud, the president's top military commander.

There have been rumours circulating in Kabul that Mr. Hekmatyar and Gen. Dostum will launch another major assault after the 'Eid Al Fitr holiday.

In the northern part of Kabul, scores of families were leaving the city and buses headed to the eastern city of Jalalabad were packed.

Iraqi team heads for U.N. talks in New York

AMMAN (Agencies) — Iraq's Deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz delayed his departure for New York Saturday, but sent an advance team to prepare for a visit to the United Nations to seek an end to the oil embargo of Iraq.

An Iraqi embassy spokesman, Adel Ibrahim, said Mr. Aziz will leave Monday.

The advance team was led by General Amer Rashid, head of Iraq's Military-Industrial Organisation.

Mr. Ibrahim said there was a "last-minute change in schedule" and Mr. Aziz stayed behind. But he refused to elaborate.

The 10-man delegation will explain to U.N. officials that "Iraq has complied with all U.N. resolutions pertaining to the destruction of non-conventional weapons and that the oil embargo is no longer justified and must be lifted completely," another Iraqi diplomat said Friday.

The U.N. Security Council imposed trade sanctions on Iraq after Iraq invaded Kuwait in August 1990 and occupied the emirate for seven months.

Before Iraq can again sell oil, its main source of foreign exchange, U.N. weapons experts must certify to the Security Council that Iraq has fulfilled its obligations to declare

and destroy prohibited weapons and accept long-term monitoring of its weapons programmes.

Last November, Iraq reversed its previous position and acknowledged U.N. Resolution 715, which commits it to long-term monitoring.

Since then, Baghdad has increased demands that the trade blockade be lifted.

Food and medical supplies are exempt from the sanctions. But Iraq, with its oil exports halted and its assets abroad frozen, has exhausted its foreign currency reserves and now says it has no more cash to pay for them.

Baghdad says the embargo claimed the lives of more than 400,000 people, including children and the elderly.

The United Nations has offered Iraq a one-time sale of oil worth \$1.6 billion to pay for urgent humanitarian needs and U.N. costs, but Baghdad has rejected the conditions, saying they infringe on its sovereignty.

U.N. Secretary General Boutros Ghali said he wants to convince Iraq to accept the plan, in part because of the strain on U.N. funds from the weapons monitoring operations.

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Upon the Occasion of
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Terror prompts Lebanon to introduce death penalty

BEIRUT (R) — Lebanon has introduced the death penalty for politically-motivated murders in a bid to clamp down on terror attacks that have revived fears for the country's stability.

Parliament approved the measure in a late-night vote on Thursday amid a wave of revulsion and fear caused by the unprecedented bombing of a Maronite church which killed 10 worshippers last month.

Parliament also voted to make the death penalty mandatory in criminal cases of murder where intent is proven — ending a 10-year freeze on capital punishment — and acted to speed up the snail-paced administration of criminal justice.

Arguing that Lebanon faced an exceptional situation and a high rate of violent crime, Pro-government deputies brushed aside protests by colleagues demanding more careful study of the proposals.

"It is indispensable to provoke a shock," Sunni Muslim Deputy Sami Khatib, a former interior minister and army commander, said.

Maronite Deputy Ghassan Matar demanded immediate application of the new law "even if it must bring daily hangings."

The government of Prime Minister Rafik Al Hariri hurriedly proposed the tough package on Monday amid concern about deteriorating security after the Feb. 27 church bombing and other attacks on Christian targets.

The government has been under heavy criticism, particularly from the influential Christian minority, for the failure of authorities to catch the authors of any of the attacks.

Attacks have included a failed attempt to blow up a busload of Orthodox priests last summer, the bombing of the right-wing Falange Party headquarters in December and last month's church bombing.

The dismantling of a powerful bomb at the French Cultural Centre in a Christian-inhabited region on Wednesday added to fears of a plot to upset Lebanon's fragile political stability.

A little over three years after the end of the 1975-90 civil

war, some Lebanese fear renewed sectarian conflict if angry Christians respond by attacking Muslims.

Leaders of the Christians, who emerged weakened from the civil war, have warned that failure to catch the bombers would sap the loyalty of their community to the state and undermine their confidence in the government's good faith towards them.

The government is also under pressure to tighten up the administration of justice after a scandal last month in which Muslim fundamentalists took the law into their own hands and executed a suspected teenage murderer under Muslim Sharia law.

The pro-Iranian Hizbollah (Party of God) and local clans in the Bekaa Valley town of Baalbek refused to hand over 16-year-old Hussein Awadah to police, saying the judicial system would take too long and would not guarantee his execution for the alleged murder of a woman and her two sons.

No judicial executions have been carried out in Lebanon since 1983 because judges have used extenuating circumstances specified in the law to avoid imposing capital punishment.

Parliament voted to delete the extenuating circumstances, closing the loopholes in the law and making the death penalty mandatory.

It also voted to establish new regional criminal courts and authorised the Justice Ministry to reinforce the under-manned judiciary by appointing up to 50 practising lawyers as judges without having to graduate from the college for judges.

Hizbollah, marking Jerusalem Day, accused Israel Friday of setting off bombs in Christian areas to plunge the country back into sectarian war.

"We are facing an Israeli project to revive strife on more than one level," Sheikh Hassan Nasrallah told a rally of about 5,000 guerrillas and supporters of Hizbollah in Beirut's southern suburbs.

Through the bombings, he added, Israel also aimed to weaken Syria.



A member of Fatah Hawks sprays graffiti on a wall in the Gaza Strip as another keeps watch (AFP photo)

4 killed near Egyptian monastery

CAIRO (Agencies) — Gunmen killed four Coptic Christians in a drive-by shooting Friday night at a 16-century-old monastery in southern Egypt known for its charitable work in the Nile Valley.

The Interior Ministry said the dead and three wounded were males, including a 13-year-old pupil and a 45-year-old priest. All were cut down as they entered the village of Al-Maharraq north of Assiut.

It was the deadliest incident targeting Coptic Christians since May 1992, near the start of a radical campaign of violence to destabilise President Hosni Mubarak's largely sectarian government. More than 320 people have died since then, mostly police and extremists.

In the 1992 murders at Dairut, south of the monastery, extremists killed 13 Christians farmers and a Muslim friend in a dispute that grew out of a soured land deal between Christian and Muslim families.

Friday night's attack also gave evidence of renewed sectarian violence in the area just north of Assiut, 370 kilometres south of Cairo, an area of Egypt historically vital to the Coptic faith. Before Friday, three-copts were slain and three wounded in the area

this month apparently in religiously motivated assaults.

The Interior Ministry said an unknown number of gunmen carried out the attack at 6:30 p.m., a half-hour after the start of the meal breaking the day-time fast during the Holy Month of Ramadan.

A spate of bombings in Cairo and in the Assiut area during Ramadan, which ends Sunday, also were at iftar. Urban streets generally are clear then, and the explosives appeared to have been so as not to cause injury.

But the monastery shooting was the opposite.

Deir Al Muharraq, at the edge of the desert outside the village of Al Qusiya, is a popular pilgrimage site for Copts.

Also called the Monastery of the Holy Virgin, it was built around the fourth century at a spot where Coptic lore says the holy family — Joseph, Mary and Jesus — stayed for 3½ years in their sojourn in Egypt to escape Herod. Some Copts say the Church of the Blessed Virgin Mary in its inner courtyard is Egypt's oldest church, its altar stone dated Dec. 11, 747.

Deir Al Muharraq is known as the largest and wealthiest Coptic monastery, whose 85 monks share their wealth with peasants in the district.

The shooting occurred just before a unity programme was aired on national television featuring Pope Shenouda III, the Coptic primate, and government ministers including the premier, Atef Sedki.

"A true Egyptian never says that there is a Muslim and a Copt," Dr. Sedki said. "Our nation is one: It's not Christian or Muslim."

Many Egyptian Muslims honour a tradition on the last Friday of Ramadan inviting Copts to share their iftar.

The government said on Friday it had thwarted a plot by militants to blow up nightclubs, cinemas, theatres and to assassinate public figures.

Interior Ministry officials said the sabotage plan was discovered in faxes, sent from abroad, seized with 25 militants who were arrested this week.

Interior Minister Hassan Al Alfi, quoted by the semi-official Al Ahram newspaper, said the faxes instructed the militants to "carry out specific terrorist operations" over the Eid Al Fitr period.

Among the bomb targets, he said, were nightclubs, cinemas, theatres and public sites. The faxes, of unknown origin, had instructions to "kill specific prominent public figures over the feast."

Palestinians and diplomats in tug-of-war over recognition

By John West
Reuter

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM — Palestinian politicians have only one thing on their mind when they greet the influx of diplomatic missions to the Israeli-occupied territories and sign development deals — statehood.

As the international community beefs up its presence in the West Bank and Gaza Strip and works out how to spend billions of dollars of development aid, anxious Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO) officials angle every last detail of negotiations, contracts and ceremonies towards their dream of a state of Palestine.

So far, they have met with mixed luck as foreign missions in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv and high-ranking visitors from abroad carefully measure out their gestures to match their country's degree of enthusiasm for a Palestinian state.

At one end of the spectrum stands the United States, ready to be friends with the new PLO but quick to slap down Palestinian pretensions to anything more. Israel, Washington's key ally in the region, officially opposes statehood.

States with pro-Arab traditions like Greece and Spain are ready to go practically all the way, signing aid agreements directly with the coming Palestinian national authority or making loans directly to PLO headquarters in Tunis.

But most Western countries meet Palestinian ambitions half way, agreeing to the notion of dealing with a Palestinian state — but only when it is clearly in place.

"Just as in our negotiations with the Israelis, our relations with aid donors are based on building a Palestinian state," said Ibrahim Shabab, president of the Palestinian House

ing Authority.

At a recent signing ceremony with the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), he thanked Washington for financing a \$25 million housing project and then went immediately on the offensive.

"I must put on the record we want to sign full agreements, not a memorandum of understanding," he told the audience.

USAID, saying it could only sign full-blown agreements with sovereign states, gave the document the lesser title.

On another occasion recently, American diplomats were aghast to find the stars and stripes flying alongside a Palestinian flag on a visit to PLO headquarters in East Jerusalem, and asked the Palestinians to take it down.

"It's not surprising. The Palestinians know our position very well and we know theirs," one U.S. diplomat commented.

Washington has promised \$100 million in aid per year to the Palestinians to back the PLO-Israeli self-rule agreement. But its overwhelming commitment remains to Israel, with an annual \$3 billion grant and close coordination on Middle East issues.

Donors together promised over \$2.5 billion aid to the Palestinians in the next five years as part of an international consensus to back the PLO-Israeli peace agreement.

But each country is setting its own priorities in deciding how to place the aid. This is heavily politically oriented since on the world scale of development economics, the occupied territories actually rank as middle-income.

"There's no way we could justify in pure humanitarian terms what we're spending here. Even Gaza is better off

than much of black Africa. That tends to make everything we do political," said a European diplomat running his country's aid programme.

A complex mix of factors determines each mission's aid programme, including not just its view of the Arab-Israeli issue but general aid policy and even the nation's political culture.

Countries where economic liberalism reigns triumphant, like the United States and Britain, stress support for the Palestinian private sector and shy away from too close an involvement with the official Palestinian development agency PLO-DA.

But Sweden, with its strong tradition of social democracy, is likely to sign an umbrella agreement with PLO-DA on the grounds that over-centralisation is less of a risk than chaos resulting from lack of coordination and an overall plan.

Japan, which has pledged \$200 million in aid over two years as a sign of its growing foreign policy activism, has recognised the PLO and the idea of a Palestinian state longer than most Western countries.

But since October, Tokyo has funnelled most of the \$45 million it has donated through U.N. agencies and is unlikely to get involved with PLO-DA or other Palestinian national institutions until they prove themselves viable.

France has managed to keep Palestinian policy-makers engaged by the adroit use of symbol and gestures at a time when Franco-Israeli ties are constantly improving.

Foreign Minister Alain Juppe published an open letter in an Arabic newspaper during a visit in February referring to "President Arafat" and "the land of Palestine."

Kuwait ill-prepared to use its expensive weapons

KUWAIT (R) — Kuwait has not put into service some of the weapons it has bought since the Gulf war because the purchases were not made according to any strategy, National Assembly members said in a hard-hitting defence review.

A report on the review, carried by the English-language Arab Times on Wednesday, said a fact-finding committee of the opposition-dominated parliament reiterated long-standing criticism that Iraq's 1990 invasion revealed the military to be a symbolic force that collapsed when put to the test.

"The report emphasised that arms procurements made after the liberation were not made on the basis of any strategy or plan to indicate where or how these arms should be used," the newspaper said. "Consequently it is no wonder that some of the equipments bought were still unused."

The standing committee is investigating all aspects of the crisis with Iraq that preceded the August 1990 invasion. A U.S.-led multinational coalition freed Kuwait in February 1991.

Arms industry sources say Kuwait is considering buying major training and maintenance services to help it improve its use and storage of the weapons bought in its rearmament drive.

Some parliament members

criticise as unnecessary the more than 1.6 billion dinars (\$5.3 billion) spent or committed by the state since the occupation when the military was looted and destroyed.

Much of the spent money relates to weapon deals for the 13,000-strong Kuwaiti military made under post-war defence pacts signed with the United States, Britain and France.

The parliamentarians have also alleged some Defence Ministry officials illegally profited on the post-war arms purchases, an allegation the ministry has consistently denied.

The government recently submitted a new proposed defence strategy to parliament, but details have not been published.

The government has also agreed in principle to list for the first time major arms procurement spending in the budget.

Major arms purchases, among other items like state investment flows, are not normally reflected in the budget.

"The military establishment did not benefit for the development Kuwait had witnessed in various aspects of life since independence in the 1960s. The army could not make any use of the huge funds spent over the years," the committee said, commenting on the pre-invasion situation.

"This is because the army was not built on right, real and clear foundations but as a sym-

bolic force that quickly collapsed in the first confrontation," it added.

The panel said the Defence Ministry did not have a defence strategy based on a rational and correct foundation.

"The (defence) establishment has failed to deal with this subject, the main goal of building the armed forces and its size, the manpower required and their skills, the required arms, its sources, the types and their ability to use it, it added.

"The government must work out a systematic plan containing a strategic vision on how to defend the country at least for the next 10 years."

The committee urged coordination must be carefully made between the time of arrival of newly-purchased arms with the army's capacity to use them.

The panel said that before the invasion the military's manpower "was not homogenous regarding qualifications and aims which eventually resulted in weak military discipline which affected the effectiveness and competence of these forces."

The military had failed to attract the necessary human resources in addition to shortages in training and shortages of appropriate weapons, the committee was reported as saying.

Nobel winner Mahfouz astonished at his fame

The Associated Press

CAIRO — Until he won the Nobel Prize in literature, change never played a major part in Naguib Mahfouz's long life.

At age 82, he's a man with a penchant for privacy and routine. But on a quiet October afternoon in 1988, as he took his customary afternoon nap, Mr. Mahfouz's small world was shaken.

What seemed then more dream than reality made Naguib Mahfouz a new friend on bookshelves from New York to Japan. And the man who deems himself "one of Egypt's small people" still finds it incredible anybody cares a whit about his words.

"I'm always astonished to learn that strangers like what I write," Mr. Mahfouz says.

The only Egyptian to win the prize, Mr. Mahfouz was little known outside the Middle East until the Nobel Prize made him the torchbearer for the Arabs' long and rich literary traditions.

His tiny world of upstairs and downstairs medieval alleyways and colourful Cairo cafe characters soon became familiar on the world's literary scene. The Nobel selectors predicted as much in their citation: "He speaks to us all."

Doubleday Editor Jacqueline Onassis, an early Mahfouz fan, bet East and West would meet in Mr. Mahfouz and helped bring him to American audiences.

"The Nobel only whetted the public's appetite for Mahfouz," said his New York editor, Martha Levin of Anchor Books, a Doubleday distributed 400,000 copies of his works.

At the time of the Nobel, Mr. Mahfouz's English-language publisher in Cairo had only 10 Mahfouzes available. Today the American University in Cairo press has 16 and can scarcely keep up with demand.

"It wouldn't surprise me if there aren't a million Mahfouz books out there already," said Arnold Tovell, the press' director.

For his part, the seemingly unflappable Mahfouz strives to avoid more change. He has been out of Egypt only three times, all brief trips, and said he doesn't care to leave again. He sent his daughter to Sweden to collect his Nobel Prize.

Mr. Mahfouz keeps to the same simple lifestyle he always preferred. He split the \$390,000 Nobel Prize money four ways: One Part to his

wife, one each to his two daughters and one — his share — to charity.

His elder daughter Hoda said perhaps the only aspect of her father's life that has changed since the Nobel is "the security issue. We try not to dwell on it, but it's always there."

Mr. Mahfouz is stalked by violent passions sweeping his homeland and much of the Arab World.

In February 1989, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini of Iran urged Muslims to kill Briton Salman Rushdie, a Muslim born in India, for writing what Ayatollah Khomeini considered a blasphemous novel, "The Satanic Verses."

A month later, radical Egyptian Sheikh Omar Abdul Rahman, already acquitted of charges he ordered the death in 1981 of President Anwar Sadat, said Mr. Mahfouz long since deserved to die for abandoning Islam by writing the 1959 novel "Children of Gebelawi."

The political novel had characters based on religious figures like Jesus Christ and the Prophet Mohammad. It remains banned in Egypt.

The death threat became more worrisome in 1992 when Muslim extremists gunned down Mr. Mahfouz's friend Farag Foda, a Cairo intellec-

tual and writer.

But unlike Mr. Rushdie, who went underground and is protected by bodyguards, Mr. Mahfouz resists extra security.

"I'm too old to change my lifestyle," he told reporters.

What he cannot change, however, is the linking of two so different men in the eyes of the world. Virtually every interviewer asks for Mr. Mahfouz's views of Mr. Rushdie, almost to the exclusion of the Nobel laureate's 60-year literary career.

"It's unfair these two are intertwined," says Hoda Mahfouz.

The frustrations of old age are a familiar Mahfouz theme. In "Miramar," he speaks through aging Mariama, owner of an Alexandria boarding house: "Tell me, why do people hurt one another? And why do we grow old?"

Like a typical Mahfouz character, Egypt's famed storyteller finds himself trapped by the time and the place.

A diabetic, Mr. Mahfouz is functionally blind and nearly deaf but has lost neither his humour nor his wide smile.

Author of almost 40 novels, 14 books of short stories and scores of screenplays, Mr. Mahfouz read his last book years ago. He always loved to stroll through old Cairo but

can walk only short distances today. He writes only a weekly newspaper column — and that he has to dictate.

"I'd much rather be writing novels," he laments.

Though Mr. Mahfouz wants the Rushdie issue behind him, it is unlikely the much-celebrated case will disappear.

The latest episode occurred late last year when a French publishing house issued "Pour Rushdie," a defence in French of Mr. Rushdie by leading Islamic writers and intellectuals.

One of the essays is under Mr. Mahfouz's byline. He told the Associated Press "I was annoyed" that his name was used because he "willingly did not submit the piece."

Asked about Mr. Mahfouz's assertion, the editors in Paris told the AP the article would be withdrawn from "For Rushdie" before the U.S. edition is published.

What does he think about Mr. Rushdie?

"A writer's freedom is absolute," Mr. Mahfouz says. "That freedom includes full thought and research. But not blasphemy. Mr. Salman Rushdie's Satanic Verses was not a book of thought and research, but it was blasphemy."

Still, Mr. Mahfouz says, nobody has a right to call for his murder.

JORDAN TELEVISION	
Tel. 7711119	
PROGRAMME TWO	
17:30	Feature film, "Residence"
19:00	News in French
19:15	Fontaine Sur
19:30	News in Hebrew
20:00	News in Arabic
20:30	You Bet Your Life
21:10	Doc "Out Of The Past"
22:30	News in English
22:50	Feature film, "Six Against The Rock"
PRAYER TIMES	
06:29	Fajr
05:47	Sunrise/Duha
11:45	Dhuhr
15:09	Asr
17:45	Maghrib

JORDAN TELEVISION	
Tel. 7711119	
Anglican Church Tel. 630851, Tel. 62543	
Catholic Church Tel. 771331	
Armenian Orthodox Church Tel. 775261	
St. Ephraim Church Tel. 771751	
Armenian International Church Tel. 625256	
Evangelical Lutheran Church Tel. 624328	
German-speaking Evangelical Congregation Tel. 654195	
The Latter-Day Saints Tel. 654932	
Church of Nazareth Tel. 675691	
The Evangelical Local Church in Amman Tel. 811295	
WEATHER	
Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology	

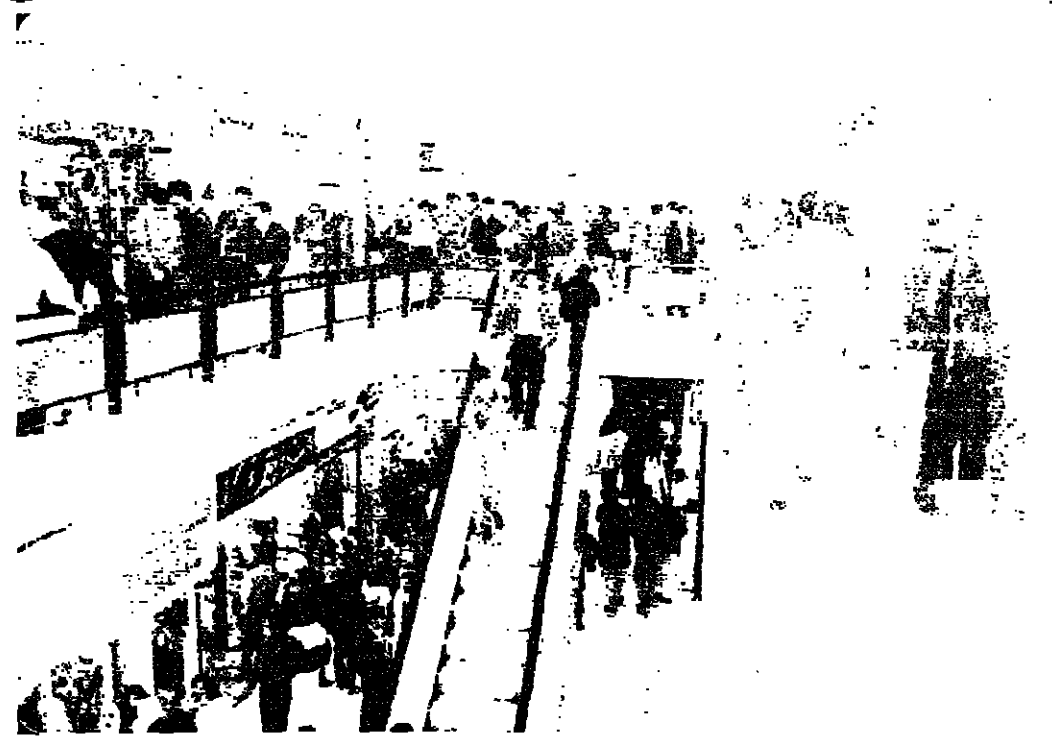
JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

Agaba	9:18	ZARQA:	9:18
Desert	4:14	Dr. Abdul Karim Kashashneh	983023
Jordan Valley	9:18	Khalid pharmacy	985417
EMERGENCIES			
Food Control Centre	637111		
Civil Defence Department	661111		
Civil Defence Immediate	630341		
Rescue	630341		
Civil Defence Emergency	199		
Rescue Police	192, 621111, 637777		
Fire Brigade	891228		
Blood Bank	775121		
Highway Police	943402		
Traffic Police	906390		
Public Security Department	630321		
HOSPITALS			
AMMAN:			
Hussein Medical Centre	813813/32		
Khalidi Maternity, J. Amn.	642416		
Akileh Maternity, J. Amn.	642412		
Jabal Amman Maternity	642362		
Malhas, J. Amman	636140		
Palestine, Samsat	641714		
Samsat Hospital	669131		
University Hospital	845845		
Al-Muasher Hospital	6672279		
Jordan Electricity Authority	815615		
Electric Power Company	636381		
RJ Flight Information	88-53201		
Queen Alia Intl. Airport	08-55200		
Bin Al Nafes Hospital	(02)347100		
AQABA:			
Princess Haya Hospital	(05)314111		
FOR THE TRAVELLER			
QUEEN ALIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT			
This information is supplied by Royal Jordanian (RJ) information department at the Queen Alia International Airport Tel. (08)52200-5, where it should always be verified.			
ARRIVALS			
Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights (Terminal 1)			
05:30	Agaba (RJ)		
06:00	Beirut (RJ)		
08:35	Beirut (RJ)		
19:50	Vienna (RJ)		
20:00	Rome (RJ)		
20:50	Frankfurt, Paris (RJ)		
23:18	Aqaba (RJ)		
Other Flights (Terminal 2)			
12:10	Rome (AZ)		
13:30	Doha, Bahrain (GF)		
16:05	Moscow (SU)		
20:25	Larnaca (CY)		
20:55	Cairo (MS)		
MARKET PRICES			
Upper/lower price in fils per kg.			
Apple	550/650		
Banana	600		
Benana (Mukammal)	650		
Cabbage	280/200		
Corn	200/120		
Cauliflower	70/40		
Clementine	300/200		
Cucumbers (large)	150/80		
Cucumbers (small)	300/200		
Eggplant	300/160		
Garlic	1100/800		

'Eid Al Fitr celebrates the end of the fasting month of Ramadan



HOLIDAY SHOPPING: Despite scattered showers, shopping centres in Jabal Hussein and downtown Amman Friday evening bustle with shoppers before 'Eid Al Fitr which begins Sunday (Photos by Rana Hussein)



King receives 'Eid cables

AMMAN (Petra) — His Majesty King Hussein Saturday received cables of good wishes on the occasion of the start of 'Eid Al Fitr, the feast marking the end of the fasting month of Ramadan.

King Hussein received cables from King Hassan II of Morocco, Sultan Qaboos Ben Saeed of Oman, Syrian Presi-

dent Hafez Al Assad, Iraqi President Saddam Hussein, Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, Yemeni President Ali Abdullah Saleh, Tunisian President Zine Al Abidine Ben Ali, Sudanese Leader Omar Hassan Al Bashir, Lebanese President Elias Hrawi, Palestinian Leader Yasser Arafat and Yemeni Vice President Ali Salem Al Beidh.

House may increase meetings to catch up on pending work

Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — With much work unfinished and little time left before the end of its first ordinary session on March 23, the Lower House of Parliament could be holding daily sessions instead of two per week after the 'Eid Al Fitr holiday is over.

Acting House Speaker Abdul Razzaq Tubeishat said over the weekend that the House will definitely hold more meetings than it used to since the session started late last year in order to complete work on draft legislations on its agenda.

The House will go into recess later this month amidst expectations it will be recalled for an extraordinary session whose agenda will be set by the government. Parliamentary sources say the House has the constitutionally required majority to demand the convening of an extraordinary session.

The sources said Islamic Action Front (IAF) deputies will not succeed in their drive to have the current session extended because the government has clearly indicated it is opposed to that.

Deputies are not restricted in the issues they can discuss if ordinary sessions are extended under a decision that only His Majesty the King is constitutionally authorised to take.

Among legislations that both the House and the government are interested in finishing before the legislature goes into recess is the draft municipality law on which parliamentary debate began two weeks ago.

Sources say the draft legislation has to be finished

because the fate of municipal elections around the Kingdom depends on it. The draft law, which was amended by the House last week to allow for the election of two-thirds of the Greater Amman Municipal Council instead of the half that the government originally wanted, sets simultaneous election dates for all municipal councils in the country.

The controversial draft sales tax law will be at the top of the agenda of the expected extraordinary session due to the urgency with which the government wants the legislation signed into law, sources said.

The draft law, which is opposed by many deputies and industrial and commercial sectors, is a basic requirement of the economic restructuring programme engineered by the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The House Financial Committee has already ended its deliberation of the draft legislation and recommended that the House approve it after endorsing what its president, Ali Abul Al Ragheb, called the "major amendments" it introduced to it.

Among the reasons cited for the government's preference of an extraordinary session to extending the current one is its willingness to have the House focus on the legislative part of its work rather than political issues.

IAF deputies have said they wanted the ordinary session extended because they did not want the government to set the House's agenda.

The House has been criticised for having disputes among its members impede its legislative duties.

Rain expected in most areas

AMMAN (J.T.) — The low atmospheric pressure affecting Jordan and the rest of the Eastern Mediterranean region is expected to remain until Sunday evening, with more showers in most areas of the Kingdom, according to the Department of Meteorology Saturday.

A department spokesman said the southern highlands of Sharah, Shobak and Ras Naqab should expect more snowfall Saturday night and Sunday morning with poor visibility because of low cloud cover and thick fog.

Earlier reports said at least

15 centimetres of snow Saturday fell on the southern areas including Shobak, Qadesieh and Rashadieh where some roads were closed.

The spokesman said the high pressure currently centred over northern Syria is expected to move eastwards Monday, causing rains to taper off gradually and partly cloudy skies.

He said Tuesday should be sunny with an expected rise in temperatures.

Temperatures for Sunday are expected to reach a maximum of 11°C and a minimum of 5°C.

Jordan, Holy See to exchange envoys soon

By Elia Nasrallah
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — The announcement by Jordan and the Holy See of the official establishment of diplomatic relations between them on March 3, 1994 has effectively raised the diplomatic rank between the two sides to embassy levels; and ambassadors are expected to be appointed shortly, according to Monsignor Raouf Najjar who is the charge d'affaires ad interim for the embassy of the Holy See in Amman. Speaking to the Jordan Times Saturday following his return to Amman from a visit

to the Vatican, Msgr. Najjar said the decision "reflects, the Holy See's desire to further develop mutual and friendly relations with the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan."

"Vatican officials have expressed their delight over this favourable development, especially as they deeply respect and appreciate the significant role and policies exercised by His Majesty King Hussein and His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan towards and in the benefit of the Christian communities in the Kingdom," said Msgr. Najjar. Jordan's ambassador to

Spain has, to date, been the Kingdom's representative at the Vatican because the Holy See prohibits Rome-based envoys to perform such a role.

The papal government, instituted in Rome in 1929 is a sovereign entity and thus seeks to establish independent diplomatic ties with other countries.

Msgr. Najjar estimated the number of Catholics in Jordan to be 140,000. Of these, he noted, 69,000 belong to the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem, 21,000 are Greek Melkites and the rest from small communities belonging to the

Chaldean Syro-Catholic, Armenian Catholics and Maronite rites.

Msgr. Najjar also said that the Catholic Church of the Latin Patriarchate in Jerusalem has established 25 parishes with 340 priests and 1,707 men and women religious serving in the Kingdom.

Deputy Prime Minister and Information Minister Jawad Anani had earlier welcomed the move, expressing hope that the establishment of full diplomatic ties would contribute towards the establishment of a just and durable Middle East peace.

WHAT'S GOING ON

The following listings are compiled from monthly bulletins and the daily Arabic press. Readers are advised to verify the listed time and place with the concerned institutions.

EXHIBITIONS

★ Book exhibition at the Safeway International.

★ "Permanent" exhibition of 54 Arab contemporary artists at Darat Al Funun of the Abdul Hameed Shoman Foundation in Jabal Luweibdeh (Tel. 643251/2).

★ Art exhibition by several Iraqi and Jordanian artists at Orfali Art Gallery (Tel. 826932).

FILM

★ Film entitled "La Chevre" at the French Cultural Centre on Monday 14 March at 8:00 p.m.

NEWS HOUR

★ ABC Weekly News Highlights and the MacNeil-Lehrer News Hour at the American Center on Tuesday March 15 at 5:00 p.m.

Iraqi team heads for U.N.

(Continued from page 1)

The Security Council is scheduled to review sanctions against Iraq around March 16. However, indications are that the trade blockade will continue.

The United States has been pushing for extending the sanctions until Iraq meets other U.N. cease-fire resolutions, such as recognition of the U.N.-drawn Iraq-Kuwait frontier and an end to persecution of minorities in Iraq.

France, however, is pressing for easing the sanctions and has been discussing with Iraqi officials oil and food trade once the sanctions are lifted. Last weekend, French foreign ministry officials met with the Iraqi undersecretary of state for foreign affairs, Riad Al Qaisi, in Paris and reportedly discussed such issues.

Iraq hits allied statement

Iraq rejected as interference in its internal affairs a joint statement by the United States

and its allies attacking Baghdad's policy towards the Kurdish-held north.

An Iraqi Foreign Ministry official described the statement as "impudent" in a communiqué released late on Friday, adding that it expressed "the reality of the policy of interference practised by the United States and its allies against Iraq and the region."

The allied statement, issued in Ankara on Thursday after a meeting of British, French, Turkish and U.S. officials, expressed satisfaction with "Operation Provide Comfort," a joint effort to deter Baghdad from attacking the north and allow humanitarian aid to reach its 3.5 million people.

The statement urged Iraq to lift an economic blockade it said Baghdad was operating in the north.

Western governments accuse Iraq of operating an internal economic blockade in the north of the country. Iraq denies this.

Pro-Israelis kill 2 guerrillas

(Continued from page 1)

crossing the border and had killed and wounded Israeli soldiers in a northern Israeli settlement.

It called the attack "the operation of the martyrs of the mosque," in reference to the massacre of Palestinians by a Jewish settler in a Hebron mosque on Feb. 25.

The security sources denied the guerrillas had entered Israel.

Saturday's encounter followed daylong clashes Friday that pitted Israeli troops and SLA militiamen against Iranian-backed guerrillas of Hizbollah (Party of God).

Eleven people, 10 Lebanese civilians and a U.N. peacekeeper from Fiji, were wounded in the artillery and rocket exchanges.

The bombardments were triggered by a roadside bomb explosion that targeted an SLA patrol in the "security zone."

The attack was claimed by Hizbollah.

Timur Goksel, the spokesman for the United Nations

Interim Force in Lebanon, (UNIFIL) refused to disclose the name and rank of the Fijian soldier, but said he was in serious condition.

UNIFIL's zone of operations abuts the Israeli-occupied enclave.

The 5,200-strong, 10-nation UNIFIL was deployed in the region in March 1978 after a brief Israeli incursion.

Israel carved out its "security" zone in 1985 to block cross-border guerrilla attacks. The enclave covers 1,100 square kilometres and is routinely patrolled by 1,200 Israeli troops and 2,500 SLA militiamen.

The SLA suffered a major blow Monday when guerrillas killed seven militiamen and two civilian sympathisers in a spate of roadside bomb explosions.

Tension has been running high in the south since a Feb. 7 Hizbollah ambush in which four Israeli soldiers were killed and five wounded.

Some army veterans were less surprised.

"We always knew there were double standards," said Ori Orr, a reserve general and

Meeting to focus on crime prevention

AMMAN (J.T.) — Efforts to combat economic and organised crime, the role of criminal law in protecting the environment and the use of the mass media in crime prevention will be among the issues addressed at the Western Asia Regional Preparatory Meeting in advance of the 1995 Ninth United Nations Congress on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders. Jointly organised by the United Nations Economic and So-

cial Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), the Jordanian Ministry of Interior and the Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Branch at the U.N. office in Vienna (UNOV), the meeting will be held from March 20 to 24 at the Royal Cultural Centre in Amman.

Topics to be discussed include promoting the United Nations crime prevention and criminal justice programme; the improvement of law enforcement agencies, prosecu-

tion systems, courts and correction administrations; strategies for preventing urban crime, including juvenile crime and violence; and victims' concerns.

Similar regional meetings were recently held for Africa, Europe and Latin America and the Caribbean.

The Amman inter-governmental regional meeting will be attended by leading government officials involved in crime prevention.

King condoles Balgez, Fakhouri families

AMMAN (Petra) — His Majesty King Hussein Saturday delegated his Private Chamberlain Prince Ali Ben Nayef to condole the Balgez family over the death of Nabil Mohammad Balgez. King Hussein also delegated Amman Governor Abdul Wahab Nawaiseh to condole the Fakhouri family over the death of Raja Issa Fakhouri.

Probe unveils double standards

(Continued from page 1)

stop him in some other way, not by shooting," Mr. Tayar testified.

This seemed to shock the panel members, who spent most of that day trying to corroborate the testimony.

The inquiry "has exposed that, in the territories, there is a double standard, one for Arabs and another for Jews, where even a Jewish murderer cannot be fired upon," said Ran Cohen, a left-wing legislator. "I can't accept it. This is not my Jewish morality."

Some army veterans were less surprised.

"We always knew there were double standards," said Ori Orr, a reserve general and

parliament member from the governing Labour Party. "The government has done its best and made mistakes. It's a complicated situation."

Subsequent testimony generally confirmed such orders were in effect for routine street unrest, but officers maintained they were not meant to prevent security forces from foiling an attack such as Goldstein's.

They said that kind of situation was never anticipated, despite warnings of potential settler violence.

Mr. Levran said the investigation was exposing "growing mediocrity in the army, as part of the mediocrity in our society in general."

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Chairman of the Board of Directors:
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MOHAMMAD AMAD

Editor-in-Chief:
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Editorial and advertising offices:

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University Road, P.O. Box 6710, Amman, Jordan.

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Sunday's Economic Pulse

By Dr. Fahed Al Fanek

Don't buy comprehensive tax reform

COMPREHENSIVE TAX reform is an attractive slogan and a demand which looks so appropriate and legitimate that no official dare to reject. However, we have some reservations and objections which we dare to offer as follows:

The first objection is that the real objective behind the slogan is to make the job rather impossible to undertake. The desired result is to prevent reforming one law on the pretext that all laws should be reformed in a package deal. In this way, we don't reform the law, currently at hand, and in fact we don't reform any law. We will rather form technical committees which can waste time and put every thing on hold for the time being.

In this framework, the slogan of comprehensive tax reform was raised simply to delay and perhaps kill the general sales tax, which is a reformed version of the Consumption Tax Law. The government has had no alternative but to pretend that it supports comprehensive tax reform, provided the reform is implemented one law at a time. Committees were formed and set in motion. Income Tax Law may be the next target.

The second objection stems from the pragmatic fact that it is not in the best interest of the state and the Treasury to put all tax laws at the table at this point in time when political parties, professional unions and pressure groups and lobbies have been successful in building or reinforcing an anti-tax mood among the population. Taxation was given the image of ripping off the people with no justification.

Jordan public opinion is currently mobilised against taxes, despite the obvious fact that taxes are the only way to preserve the state and maintain its vital services. Proper taxation is a pre-requisite for financial self-sufficiency and for the reduction of dependency on foreign and external borrowing instead of remaining under the mercy of donor states' good will, let alone paying off part of our debt.

The third objection to the so-called comprehensive tax reform is that legislative stability is more valuable than the introduction at short notice of cosmetic reforms, which may

"Proper taxation is a pre-requisite for financial self-sufficiency and for the reduction of dependency on foreign borrowing, instead of remaining under the mercy of donor states' good will."

turn out to be set-backs. Businessmen were always able to live with stable deficient laws much better than laws which can be altered or changed frequently. Long term investors require an atmosphere of legal stability. They don't like an environment of uncertainty and the expectation of surprises. They need to rest assured that the legal guarantees of today could not be abolished or amended tomorrow.

Of course, we are not against comprehensive reform per se. The problem is what is meant by reform. Some activists mean reduction of certain taxes or removing others all together. They package this destructive call as alleviation of excessive tax burden.

When we are dealing with the draft sales tax law they argue that this is an indirect tax, and accordingly unfair, the government should look for more direct taxes because they are more just. But once we start dealing with Income Tax Law, they will call for more exemptions and lower rates, ostensibly to alleviate the tax burden of limited-income groups.

They don't even mention the heavy responsibilities that the state has to undertake and the basic services and commitments which could not be financed from a budget already in deficit.

Almost one third of the 1994 budget will be financed by rescheduling of debts, foreign aid or fresh borrowing. I cannot understand the logic of some national parties and personalities who allow themselves to recklessly participate in creating or strengthening an anti-tax position.

Euro-election campaigns avoid talk about Europe

By Robert Woodward
Reuter

LONDON — For Britons, June's European elections will be an opportunity once again to demonstrate their insularity. The main themes will be British jobs, Britain's economic prospects and the performance of Prime Minister John Major.

Of secondary importance, but for the ruling Conservatives of destructive potential, will be Britain's place in the European Union (EU) and where the community goes from here.

Since sterling was forced to withdraw from the Exchange Rate Mechanism (ERM) in 1992 and last year's battle over the Maastricht Treaty, the three major British parties have had to reassess their attitude to Europe.

Conservative and Labour officials agree June's ballot will centre on a largely domestic agenda because of scepticism among British voters about the European Union and the desire of party leaders to paper over internal rifts on Europe.

Even the centrist Liberal Democrats, Britain's most pro-European party, have watered down their desire for a federal Europe to take account of the Maastricht future.

But it is the Conservative government, almost brought down by an internal revolt over closer ties with Europe last year, which faces the toughest task — convincing voters they offer the best alternative at the June 9 poll for the European Parliament.

Deeply unpopular because of a series of scandals and policy crises, the party remains deeply split over Europe.

Right-wingers who stepped away from the edge at the end of the Maastricht debate still regularly voice their dislike of what they see as the EU's centralising tendencies.

Foreign Minister Douglas Hurd, his party's elder statesman, has the task of trying to appease these rebels while stressing the government's commitment to Europe in its election manifesto.

Party officials say he is nowhere near squaring the concerns of right-wingers who mistrust any policy emanating from Brussels with Mr. Major's wish to be at the centre of European policy-making.

Mr. Hurd has pleaded for unity ahead of the elections in which the deeply unpopular conservatives, some 20 points behind Labour in opinion polls, are likely to be hammered.

"In 1994, if we have any wisdom we will not scratch about among the worn-out arguments of 1993," he told prospective Conservative candidates last month. "We should now put forward as a united party our idea of what Europe should be."

Mr. Major has tried to appease the malcontents by promising that Britain will not re-enter Europe's currency

grid before the next election, due to mid-1997, and stressing his belief in a decentralised community of individual nation states.

The Conservatives plan to stress the "Britishness" of their European policy and how the government's wish for strong links with Europe protects British jobs.

"Let's agree on policy and not argue about institutions" sums up ministers' attempts at party unity.

Party chief Sir Norman Fowler, launching the Conservative campaign at the end of February, said: "This party stands up for British interests but is committed to Europe."

As far as Labour is concerned the European elections, coupled with the local British elections in May, are a chance for voters to express their mid-term distaste for the government and perhaps trigger Mr. Major's downfall.

In the 1989 Euro-election Labour won 45 seats, the Conservatives 32, the Ulster Unionist one and independent candidates two, and the Scottish Nationalists one. In June, British constituencies will increase to 87 from 81.

Labour, which buried its pro-European stance during the Maastricht battle in favour of embarrassing the government, is expected to coast through the campaign, relying on voters' anger with Mr. Major and his ministers to win seats.

Mr. Major believes Labour's Achilles heel is its support for the EU's social chapter on Labour and welfare rights which he claims would increase British business costs and shed jobs.

Mr. Major forced ratification of the Maastricht Treaty, with an opt-out from the social chapter, through parliament last July only after making the issue the subject of a vote of confidence.

But Labour believes its support for the chapter is a vote-winner. It accuses Mr. Major of wanting to create a sweat-shop economy and of speaking with a "forked tongue" on Europe.

The Liberal Democrats are likely to be the big winners of the elections. Profiting from Conservative deserters and winning a protest vote which went to the greens in 1989.

Liberal Democrat research shows they could win five or more seats while Labour could take up to 60. Their campaign will focus on the splits in the two other parties over Europe; there is also a hard core of anti-Europeans in the Labour party.

Despite the prospect of a defensive campaign, some conservatives believe the party should take on, and hopefully rout, the right-wingers by running a vigorous, pro-European campaign which would show the electorate Mr. Major meant business.

"If we're lukewarm we won't get the votes here," said former prime minister Sir Edward Heath. "What we've got to have is a full-blooded, positive campaign by the prime minister and get people out to vote."

Talks at gun point?

THE MOST shocking revelation to emerge so far from the Israeli inquiry into the Al Ibrahimi Mosque massacre was the testimony of the Israeli commander of border police who testified that Israeli security forces have been forbidden to shoot at Jewish settlers even when they are allowed to kill Palestinians in cold blood. "Instructions are to take cover, wait until the clip is empty or the gun jams and then overpower (the involved settler)," the commander told the stunned five-man panel investigating the massacre. Accordingly, even if all the Israeli security people were on duty at the mosque on that tragic morning, as originally planned, they would not have been able to do anything to stop the slaughter. The commander was quite explicit on this point. "Even if I had been there (in the mosque), I could not have done anything," he told the commission.

This constitutes a policy position instituted not by the right-wing Likud Party but by Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin himself, the self-styled peacemaker. In a way this disclosure does not come as a surprise since Rabin has a terrible record when it comes to the treatment of Palestinians. His iron-fist policy towards the Palestinians with whom he professes peaceful intentions came vividly to the surface when, as a minister of defence in the government of former Israeli Prime Minister Shamir, he called on his troops to break the bones of Palestinians caught in the windmill of the intifada.

Little wonder then that the PLO is adamant on putting in place an effective international machinery for the protection of Palestinians before it resumes peace negotiations. Palestinian leaders cannot be blamed for suspending the peace talks with Israel as long as this danger hangs ominously over the heads of their people.

Likewise, U.S. procrastination over the adoption of a U.N. Security Council resolution on the Hebron massacre cannot be reassuring to the Palestinians. More than two weeks have passed since the pogrom and the principal U.N. organ for maintaining peace and security is still unable to agree on an effective action to deal with its ramifications and implications. The council did not take that long to act in similar incidents in the world.

What adds insult to injury is the report that Washington has threatened to veto any action by the council if the PLO does not commit itself to returning to the peace process forthwith. This kind of arm-twisting is not exactly the most beneficial way to advance the negotiations. The parties cannot be expected to negotiate in earnest with a gun pointed at their heads.

The Palestinian request for an effective international presence is all the more pressing given the preliminary findings of the Israeli commission. The United Nations must take into consideration these most damaging findings when they decide to act vis-a-vis the Hebron massacre.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

A COLUMNIST in Al Ra'i daily said Saturday that if the United States is serious about the resumption of the Arab-Israeli peace negotiations, it should clearly demand that Jewish settler expansion programmes on Arab lands be halted. Tareq Masarrah said that the United States realises too well that the Ibrahimi Mosque in Hebron is an Islamic shrine and ought to be clearly demarcated from the presence of any armed persons at the place. This should be the only and natural reply on the part of the United States to the massacre, committed by the Jewish settlers and Israeli troops at the holy place in the West Bank city, said the writer. Any condemnation by Washington of the massacre is one levelled at the Israeli government which is solely responsible for the crime, added the writer. He said that the United States is, however, unexpected to move in this direction since it is American funds that continue to feed the settlements and encourage the presence of the settlers. We cannot be convinced that Washington is backing efforts for genuine and lasting peace as long as the settlements are in place and the settlers are armed, added the writer.

WE ARE not surprised by Israel's rejection of the Russian proposal for re-examining the whole Middle East peace process, because it is Israel which is benefitting from the status quo, said Al Dustour daily Saturday. Israel, which has aborted all moves for a genuine and lasting peace, has been defying the will of the community and the U.N. resolutions all along and it is natural for the Zionist leaders to turn down Moscow's move to reassess the peace process with a view to giving it some momentum, said the paper.

Washington Watch

Whitewater storm shakes White House

THE LEAD story in Washington for the past week concerns the Clintons' involvement in a real estate deal of the failed Whitewater Development Corporation. The story is essentially an old one and, on the face of it, appears to be more confusing than serious.

The scandal gets its name from the Whitewater deal, which the Clintons and their friends the McDougals, launched in the early 1980's. The scheme ultimately failed, as did many similar investments when the national real estate market plummeted at that time. There are some questions about why the Clintons did not claim a loss on their tax report for the year in which the Whitewater deal fell through, but these were investigated rather thoroughly during the 1992 campaign and judged to be not very serious.

The story is that in addition to being a friend of the Clintons, James McDougal was the head of the Madison Guaranty Savings and Loan, which ultimately became insolvent and was shut by federal regulators. Hillary Clinton, as a partner in the Rose law firm, represented Madison before Arkansas state regulators who were curious about the financial strength of the institution, and she apparently persuaded them of its solvency. Questions have been raised about the propriety of Hillary Clinton's representation of Madison before a state agency headed by a person appointed by her husband; and about whether at any time the Clintons became aware that Mr. McDougal was leading Madison into insolvency.

Another facet of the story is that another Rose partner and Clinton friend, Webster Hubbell (who is now the third-ranking person at the Department of Justice), represented the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation in its legal action against Madison. Mr. Hubbell somewhat quickly struck a deal which seemed to let Madison off rather lightly. The personal and professional links between Mr. Hubbell and the Clintons raise the question of whether somehow the Clintons helped to get special treatment for their friend James McDougal.

Even in this brief and incomplete summary, it becomes clear how complicated the Whitewater case is, involving as it does so many interweaving personal, professional and political links. Moreover anyone familiar with a small state like Arkansas knows that such dealings are commonplace and, while not wholly ethical, are almost unavoidable where the state's leaders in politics and business move closely together in the same social circles, with personal ties going back years before any of them rose to prominence.

It is not surprising, that while Republicans have been trying for months to use the

Whitewater story to discredit the President, Bill Clinton, they were unable to do so. For one, the story remained too confusing. Although it was fascinating to the President's political opponents and to some reporters, it didn't make sense to the general public. And, even when pieces of the story were understood, they seemed rather trivial in comparison with the major issues of the day — particularly when it was understood that these incidents took place well prior to Clinton's presidency.

And so while Whitewater remained an irritant to the Clintons, it was essentially a back-page non-story. Even when President Clinton bowed to congressional pressure and appointed an independent special prosecutor to investigate the case, the public barely took note.

But the Whitewater saga has exploded into a major press sensation over the last two weeks, largely due to misuses by the White House itself. The story's enhanced status is threatening to weaken Mr. Clinton's public standing and his chances to control the nation's political agenda in this critical legislative (health care, welfare reform, crime) and election (with 34 senate and all 435 congressional seats on the line) year.

In order for a non-story to become a scandal, it must be validated and it must develop extensions so that it grows in dimension with each passing day. In part, it was Mr. Clinton's appointment of a special prosecutor that first gave validation to the Whitewater story. After all, the press and the public could ask, if there were no problem, why appoint an independent investigator to look at it? But it was on March 3, however, that the Whitewater story truly began to develop and gain the momentum necessary to become a scandal.

On that day, the Washington Post reported on its front page that key Clinton White House officials were briefed by the Department of the Treasury about the ongoing investigation into the failed Madison Savings and Loan, with which the Clintons have been linked. On that same day, papers across the country reported that Hillary Clinton's former law partner and now Associate Attorney General (Webster Hubbell) was being accused of excessive billing in a case in which he had been representing the same bank. The paper also covered reports that the special prosecutor is reopening the investigation into the reported suicide of Vincent Foster, Mr. Foster, who had been Deputy White House Legal Counsel, was another of Hillary Clinton's former partners at Arkansas' Rose law firm who had been involved with the Whitewater land deal.

The next day's national press reported that former

employees of the Rose firm in Arkansas claimed that some files of Mr. Foster's which related to the Whitewater case had been shredded. Although there has been no firm proof that the Rose firm did in fact shred any files, there are enough doubts that the story has stayed alive. (And within the past few days, reports have also surfaced about a safe which was removed from Mr. Foster's White House office after his suicide, the contents of which investigators have been denied).

There were also stories suggesting that White House Legal Counsel Bernard Nussbaum had mishandled the entire affair in an unethical manner, and whether those allegations were true or not, they did lead to Mr. Nussbaum's resignation. And all the while there were daily stories of prominent Republican Senators who mistrusted the White House's handling of the scandal and were calling for a congressional investigation of the case.

Within the next few days, once again, the press was filled with new Whitewater stories: Six Clinton administration officials involved in the briefing between the White House staff and the Treasury Department were subpoenaed by the special prosecutor to testify before a grand jury. There were questions about Hillary Clinton's role in the Rose firm and allegations that she had called for the shredding of the Foster files. And there were questions about whether Mr. Clinton or Mrs. Clinton knew of the ethically questionable briefings that the Treasury Department provided to White House staff on the Madison Savings and Loan investigation.

By now, the still and ever more confusing Whitewater story had all the ingredients of a national scandal. In this atmosphere the press began its practice of feeding on one crisis and competing for new and more sensational aspects of the story.

As Howard Kurtz, the media critic for the Washington Post, put it "Like on any big story, when all the big news organisations are chasing it, you are afraid to sit on any little development for fear that the other guy will have it tomorrow. So it does lead to overplaying some incremental developments." In his interview with the White House Bulletin, he added, "I don't think there is any question that journalists are far more absorbed by the Whitewater saga than the rest of America. I don't think most people understand the story, and I don't think most people care about the story."

The White House Bulletin ran a major article about the feeding frenzy itself, using the example of the strange series of rumours regarding the death of Vincent Foster. The New York Post ran an article about the safe that was allegedly moved from Mr. Foster's office after his death,

something which the White House denies. The reporter of the story, however, unwittingly helped to start a more wild rumour that Mr. Foster actually committed suicide in an apartment in Virginia and was moved to the park where his body was later found. How did this story get started?

The answer is unclear. The source of the rumour claimed that the Post reporter conveyed information about an apartment used by Mr. Clinton's advisors in Virginia to a Senate staffer and asked for confirmation. The staffer professed ignorance, but then began to spread the rumour that Mr. Foster committed suicide there. The spokesman for the senator denied the story, as did the Post reporter. However, the influence of the rumour was felt on Wall Street where the Dow Jones average fell more than 40 points before recovering slightly.

The Bulletin warned its readers: "As often happens with scandal stories, at times the rumours can run ahead of the facts. Bulletin readers should expect to hear many more rumours in the weeks ahead, with a few of them making their way into the national press." Whatever the reason, the point is that what was once a minor back-page story has now become a daily front-page headline with new allegations appearing everywhere.

Suddenly the White House is a very public crisis. Even in a press conference that President Clinton held with Georgian President Eduard Shevardnadze, the majority of questions were directed to President Clinton and centered around Whitewater. Once again, Mr. Clinton is not able to define his agenda or control the public debate on issues, and the effects on him have been serious. Public opinion polls show a decline of support for the president, and this is largely driven by attitudes regarding Whitewater.

While in mid-February, only 15 per cent of those polled believed that the president may have done something wrong related to Whitewater, today it is up to 36 per cent. This not only further erodes his support in a period when he needs it to pass legislation but it also virtually neutralises the role that Hillary Clinton can play as the leading advocate for health care reform. Indeed, in recent weeks, the First Lady's ratings have fallen even more than the president's. The trouble has been that these two weeks have brought back into public view some of the character questions that have been the Clinton's most troubling problem since the campaign: his trustworthiness and her arrogance and self-righteousness.

The writer is President of the Washington-based Arab-American Institute

LETTERS

Spoiling the fun!

To the Editor

AS a regular and fervent reader of the Jordan Times, by far the only readable newspaper in town, I have learned to appreciate your efforts to keep a smile on our faces, if not even make us laugh with page six/bottom left corner of your paper. Nevertheless, I have slowly come to realise that the same thing at pretty frequent intervals of time. You may agree that the first time I read "the Better Half" about the whistling tea kettle, I could not help smiling. Yet, when I had to swallow it again in the issue of March 2, my expectations for a good laughter were spoiled.

But there is always plenty room for improvements. I am confident that you will do your best to meet your readers' needs for genuine fun.

Rodica G. Ma'ayta,
Amman.

The Jordan Times welcomes letters and contributions from its readers on any subject they wish to tackle. Letters intended and preferably address as well. Names can be withheld only upon request and under special circumstances. Letters are return of unused manuscripts.

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Arab
WASHINGTON
Saudi Arabia
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PLO will

Christopher apparent
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Mr. Arafat back-
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Mr. Christopher im-
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tions on delay," they said.
Mr. Arafat told Mr.
Mr. Arafat told Mr.
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Some PLO officials
suggested a compromise
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the United States was
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dum. The Geneva con-
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of civilians in the area it oc-
cupies.
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can facilitate voting or
elections when the resolu-
tion is put into effect.
The letter said Mr.
Mr. Khatami said he
strongly supported the
proposal and that he
was presenting a Russian
draft of the letter to Mr.
Mr. Arafat. He re-
fused to dis-
cuss it.
But PLO officials
included support for a
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The PLO's presence
help establish a police
force. Israel had been
in Israel, Mr. Khatami

World Cup game could attract Arab-Americans

WASHINGTON (USA) — Saudi Arabia and Morocco meet in a first-round World Cup game June 25 at Giants Stadium in East Rutherford, New Jersey, that could attract interest among thousands of people of Arab descent who now live in the United States. Morocco goes into the game with a slight home-field advantage based on the number of its countrymen living in the tri-state area near Giants Stadium. The 1990 U.S. census shows 696 Moroccans living in New Jersey, 3,643 in New York, and 79 in Connecticut. The census shows 15,541 people of Moroccan descent in the United States.

Meanwhile, about 900 Saudis live in New York, 228 in New Jersey, and 78 in Connecticut. Overall, there are 12,632 Saudi-born people living in the United States.

The census shows 6,990 Lebanese living in New York, 3,401 in New Jersey, and 1,239 in Connecticut. There are 9,425 Egyptians in New Jersey, 14,142 in New York, and 631 in Connecticut. A total of 66,313 Egyptians live in the United States.

World Cup organizers might have attracted huge Arab interest in the Saudi-Morocco match by locating it in the Detroit venue. The census shows 10,488 Lebanese in Michigan, many of them in the Detroit suburb of Dearborn. The Lebanese rank 10th in terms of that state's foreign-born population. Overall, there are 86,369 Lebanese in the United States, which ranks them 43rd overall in this country's foreign-born population.

Besides the Lebanese, the 1990 census also showed 14,343 Iraqis in Michigan, ranking them 6th in that state's foreign-born population. There were also 293 people from Algeria, 1,921 from Egypt, 263 from Saudi Arabia, 179 from Morocco, 158 from Sudan, 157 from Libya, and 113 from Tunisia.

Saudi Arabia's two other games in the first round are against the Netherlands June 20 and Belgium June 29 at Robert F. Kennedy Stadium in Washington, D.C. The census

shows about 120 people of Saudi descent living in Washington compared to 324 from the Netherlands and 137 from Belgium.

Meanwhile, Morocco also plays Belgium June 19 in at the Citrus Bowl in Orlando, Florida. This could be an intriguing matchup, since both countries have a large number of French speakers. Belgium might have a slight home-field advantage in this game since there are 2,822 Belgians in Florida compared to 1,570 from Morocco.

Morocco's other first-round game is against the Netherlands June 29 in Orlando, and the Netherlands has the advantage with 6,097 of its countrymen living in Florida. The Dutch far outnumber Moroccans nationwide. The census shows 96,198 Dutch in the United States.

Saudi Arabia is making its first appearance in the World Cup, qualifying as the Asian champion. Coached by Leo Beenhakker, its top players are midfielder Khalid Al Muwallid, and forwards Fahad Mahalel, Mahed Mohammed, and Saeed Owairan. Each Saudi player was said to have received \$100,000 and a brand-new limited-edition Mercedes from King Fahd for qualifying for the World Cup. Odds-makers put the Saudis' chances of winning the World Cup at 250-1. Co-favorites for the World Cup championship are Germany and Brazil. Odds-makers put their chances of winning at 4-1.

Morocco has qualified three times for soccer world's championship. Its World Cup record is one win, three losses, and three ties. In 1986, Morocco surprised many people when it reached the World Cup quarterfinals before losing to eventual champion West Germany.

Morocco qualified for the 1994 tournament as Africa Group B champion.

Coached by Abdelhak Blinda, its top players are forward Mohammed Chaouch, and Mustapha Hadji, and midfielder Rachid Daoudi. Odds-makers have made the Moroccans 150-1 shots to win the World Cup.

PLO willing for talks

(Continued from page 1)

Christopher apparently offered a compromise in an effort to woo Mr. Arafat back to negotiations with Israel.

The U.S. offer was made in a letter to Mr. Arafat in which Mr. Christopher urged him to resume the negotiations "without delay," they said. The letter was delivered to Mr. Arafat early Friday morning by U.S. Ambassador John McCarthy.

Mr. Arafat told Mr. McCarthy he could not respond before consulting with senior aides and other PLO leaders, according to the sources.

The sources said Mr. Christopher's letter promised that the United States would support a resolution calling for a "temporary international or foreign presence in the occupied territories" in return for the PLO's resumption of talks.

The letter did not refer to a foreign military presence, they said.

Some PLO officials have suggested a compromise could mean a limited number of unarmed observers. Israel has indicated it might accept non-military international observers.

The letter made clear that the United States would still refuse a reference to Jerusalem as an occupied territory and would not back a reference to the Geneva convention, which says an occupying power must guarantee the protection of the civilians in the area it occupies, the sources said.

The U.S. delegation will abstain from the voting on these items when the resolution will be put into vote, the sources quoted the letter as saying.

Mr. Kozyrev said he brought a strong message of support to Mr. Arafat from the Russian leadership and that he would be presenting a Russian plan to restart the talks to Mr. Arafat and other PLO leaders.

He refused to divulge details. But PLO officials said it included support for international protection for Palestinians and promises to upgrade the PLO's diplomatic representation in Moscow and to help establish a police force once self-rule had been negotiated.

In Israel, Mr. Kozyrev held

Living in fear Egyptians forced to accept gun law as violence escalates

By Marie Colvin

MOHAMMAD never goes anywhere nowadays without a gun. Two of his colleagues in the secret police were shot and killed recently as they sat down to their evening Ramadan iftar.

Even as he rides to work on a motorcycle, he has a gun cocked and ready. His job, as a member of the interior ministry of police, transportation division, is to ride shotgun protecting passengers on the trains to Cairo from Assiut, the upper Egypt city that is the centre of a wave of fundamentalist violence threatening the government of President Hosni Mubarak.

Mohammad, 29, began chain-smoking cheap Cleopatra cigarettes after extremists raked one train with gunfire as it left the city, wounding four foreign tourists; then on Wednesday, they exploded a bomb in a first-class car as the train left Assiut station, wounding six other foreigners.

"Daily when I leave my home I don't know if I will return," Mohammad said as he sat in another first-class car, a target within a target. He is no stranger to fundamentalist violence. Last year, as a wave of shootings and bombings began, he shot and killed a terrorist who pulled a gun at the Assiut station and killed his partner. The dead man was carrying a bag that contained 13 bombs.

"I knew him because we used to pray together at school," Mohammad said. "I knew he had moved close to Islamic fundamentalists after he left the university and could not find a job. And I knew he would not be taking that train to go home." Mohammad received a cash reward, a pilgrimage to Mecca and permission to carry a gun fulltime because he was considered a

target for revenge attacks.

Mohammad is an example of the internecine nature of the conflict that has Western governments, particularly America's, fearing Egypt's collapse into the hands of the fundamentalists.

He took his job in the police because after university he could not find employment, although Egypt guarantees a government job to all graduates. Safwat, the man he killed,

was the same age and had the same experience, but he turned to Islam and eventually joined the Gama'at Islamiya, a militant branch of the Islamic movement in Egypt.

It is this group and a parallel violent organisation, the Egyptian Islamic Jihad, that are responsible for the mounting cycle of violence in Egypt. Sheikh Omar Abdul Rahman, their spiritual mentor, is on trial in the United States on charges that he inspired the bombing of the World Trade Centre in New York. Two weeks ago a militant was hanged in Cairo for the murder of Farag Foda, an anti-fundamentalist writer.

Most of the religious violence in Egypt occurs in and around Assiut and is rarely reported. Few weeks ago three members of the Gama'at Islamiya ambushed a military patrol returning from a sweep that rounded up hundreds of young men. One of the ambushers was killed, as was one conscript. The villagers at the cross-

roads where the fundamentalists fired from an abandoned villa knew the dead terrorist; he was 19 and lectured at the mosque. "He was very polite, very nice," said a local farmer.

Upper Egypt is an area of poverty, frustration and hopelessness. Its sons turn to extremist movements for solace against what they see as a corrupt and distant government. The situation is complicated by the fact that the area

has a tradition of vendetta.

Earlier last month, the Gama'at Islamiya threatened foreign tourists and investors with death should they not leave by Feb. 22. Two banks in Cairo were bombed few weeks ago. The government seems unable to end the attacks despite a policy of detaining thousands of suspects without charges, the imprisonment of many leaders and, according to human rights groups, systematic torture.

Last month, American intelligence analysts reported to President Bill Clinton that Mr. Mubarak will not be able to hold out for long if things go on as they are. But influential Egyptians — no fans of the government — argue that the Islamic groups do not seem strong enough to seize power. Cairo shows little signs of tension with most people going about their business.

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has a tradition of vendetta.

Strategy key to U.S. victory in Saudi planes deal

By Ashraf Fouad

Reuters

DUBAI — Saudi Arabia's need to tighten strategic ties with the United States and anger over Europe's reluctance to move against Serbia in Bosnia were crucial factors in its decision to buy American in a \$6 billion aircraft deal.

"A key factor is that Saudi Arabia believes only America is able to come to its rescue in a crisis," said an Arab diplomat familiar with the deal announced by U.S. President Bill Clinton last month.

Another said French Prime Minister Edouard Balladur received first hand a taste of Saudi anger when Crown Prince Abdullah Ben Abdul Aziz explained to him on a visit to Riyadh in January why the kingdom sees

Europe's approach to Bosnia as "ham-fisted."

"It seems the prince told him to his face that Europe's behaviour in Bosnia was shameful and made clear it was a tall order for it to expect a share of the aircraft deal," he added.

Although King Fahd did not specifically endorse his brother's outspoken comments, the prince's remarks underlined a deep Saudi disenchantment with Europe that may have torpedoed its chances of getting a piece of the action, he said.

Both Americans and Saudis say commercial and technical merit alone decided the deal that Mr. Clinton announced as a triumph for his country's industry.

Mr. Balladur was the last of a string of European leaders to visit the king or phone

him to lobby for a share in replacing the ageing fleet of the national carrier Saudia in what is being described as the aircraft industry's "deal of the decade."

Industry sources say European manufacturers may still get some crumbs, probably

world. You are truly the only game in town." Riyadh's long-serving Washington Ambassador, Prince Bandar Ben Sultan, a nephew of King Fahd, told Mr. Clinton when the deal was announced.

The diplomats said Saudis

"Gulf Arab oil revenues were seriously drained by the Gulf war, which cost Saudi Arabia alone some \$55 billion, and have been seriously eroded since by the oil price slump."

parts of some of the engines to power up to 60 long, medium and short-haul airlines.

But the Saudis have clearly signalled their political aims. "It is your destiny to be the only superpower in the

of Kuwait and led the coalition that drove Iraqi forces out of the emirate seven months later.

Diplomats said Saudi Arabia, the world's largest oil exporter, believed the U.S. would come to the rescue once again. It sees the European attitude, by contrast, as ambivalent.

Saudi Arabia is also delighted Washington continues to stand firmly against the lifting of U.N. sanctions imposed on Iraq during the Gulf crisis.

Europeans, apart from Britain, adopt a softer approach. Riyadh is also unhappy about what it sees as an unseemly scramble by French and other European oil firms to cash in on Baghdad's eventual return to the oil market, the diplomats added.

The lifting of sanctions would lead to a resumption of Iraqi oil exports at a time when oil prices are at five-year lows and poised to plunge further at any hint of a possible Iraqi return.

Gulf Arab oil revenues were seriously drained by the Gulf war, which cost Saudi Arabia alone some \$55 billion, and have been seriously eroded since by the oil price slump.

Another deciding factor that worked in favour of the U.S., diplomats said, was Washington's full cooperation in successful talks this year to help the Saudi government over a cash crisis caused by the sharp drop in world oil prices.

It helped negotiate a \$6 billion loan which was due to pay U.S. makers over two years.

Uprising in Bophuthatswana is blow to groups opposing election

By Tina Susman

Associated Press

JOHANNESBURG, South Africa — The success of a popular uprising against a despotic homeland leader is a triumph for the forces trying to unite all South Africa behind the country's first non-racial elections.

But the chaos unleashed in Bophuthatswana serves as a chilling reminder of how easily South Africa's transition to democracy could turn into a bloodbath.

The pro-African National Congress (ANC) uprising forced the black homeland's ruler, Lucas Mangope, to accept the election and eventual reincorporation of Bophuthatswana into South Africa. It was a devastating blow to black and white groups trying to block the vote.

Zulu leader Mangosuthu Buthelezi was left out in the cold as the only black homeland leader still reluctant to enter the election. And members of small, pro-apartheid white groups have seen the fate that may await them if they persist in trying to mount a war against a black majority solidly behind the African National Congress.

Pressure is sure to increase on Mr. Buthelezi to abandon his white racist allies and seek

accommodation with the ANC, which is certain to lead the government after the April 26 election.

"We hope all the despots are learning the lesson that the people cannot be oppressed forever," the ANC in Natal province said in a clear message to Mr. Buthelezi, whose stronghold is Natal.

The uprising... is a warning to those political forces who even imagine that the elections can be postponed."

Mr. Mangope, an unpopular despot ruling over the impoverished black homeland, was compelled to surrender to protests Friday and drop months of opposition to the vote. It took only a signal from the ANC to spark a virtual people's revolution in Bophuthatswana, paralyzing Mr. Mangope's government and splitting his security forces in a matter of days.

His capitulation further whittled down the freedom alliance, the coalition of pro-apartheid whites and anti-ANC blacks formed late last year to fight the election.

The ANC has negotiated with the alliance while standing firm in opposition to its demands for sovereign, ethnically based homelands — whether for white Afrikaners, Mr. Mangope's Tswanas or Mr. Buthelezi's Zulus.

Mr. Buthelezi, who heads

the KwaZulu homeland and is an alliance member, has registered for the election but says he won't take part without guarantees of Zulu sovereignty. Pro-apartheid white parties so far are boycotting the election, saying they will fight for a white homeland.

Both groups have threatened civil war if their demands are not met. But the slaying Friday of three right-wing whites by black soldiers in Bophuthatswana — including two executed as they pleaded for help — showed the difficulty they would face trying to create a united military force.

The whites, all members of the neo-Nazi Afrikaner Resistance Movement or AWB, were killed just hours after rolling into Bophuthatswana's burning capital vowing to help Mr. Mangope.

Mr. Mangope, despite his loathing of the ANC, wanted no part of the white AWB fighters, known for their racist rhetoric and Swastika-like insignias.

Hours after he asked them to leave, the whites were killed in a shootout with homeland troops who let them squirm in agony in the dirt for several minutes before executing them.

"This claim of the AWB that they stand for independent homelands apparently



ANC leader Nelson Mandela salutes crowds as he enters Roodepan township

where a meeting with Frelimo was called off (AFP photo)

did not make much impression on the Bophuthatswana defense forces." South African Foreign Affairs Minister Pik Botha said later.

"I hope this is a very good lesson to Eugene Terreblanche," he added, referring to the AWB's bellicose leader.

President F.W. de Klerk said the right-wing groups had "proved the folly" of going where they were not invited.

It was not the first time Terreblanche's men had been rebuffed by forces they

claimed were allies. In 1991, white South African soldiers opened fire on AWB members trying to prevent Mr. De Klerk from speaking in their town. Three AWB men were killed, despite Mr. Terreblanche's claim the military would support him in a showdown against Mr. De Klerk's reforms.

The murder of the wounded right-wingers Friday, captured by television cameras, will likely galvanise white extremists to further hatred of blacks, making any lasting

alliance with Mr. and his KwaZulu all the more unlikely.

Even if the two groups manage to stick together and preserve the remnants of the Freedom Alliance, Mr. Mangope's capitulation underscores the burgeoning impatience of disenfranchised blacks demanding a say in their future.

The brutal snub of the AWB is just another instance of the inability of whites to halt the transition to black rule.



Egyptian fundamentalists shout anti-government slogans in front of Cairo's military court (AFP photo)

Egyptians — a 14-year-old girl was killed last year during the attempted assassination of the prime minister — have caused the revolution among many Egyptians.

Nor are the Egyptian groups well funded any more. Iran, an early sponsor, has economic problems and is reportedly sending less cash. Money from Saudi Arabia, which arrived via supporters of those attempting to overthrow the Egyptian state or unsuspecting Saudis who thought their donations were building mosques or clinics, were cut off last year after the Saudi government, at Egypt's urging, passed a law that all foreign donations needed government approval.

After denying that the fundamentalists were a home-grown problem and blaming "outside intervention," the Egyptian government seems to have finally admitted what it is facing. "These people are not a threat that will lead to the overthrow of the government," Usama Al Bas, a presidential adviser, said recently. "But they are a serious problem and we are taking it seriously. The solution is not simplistic and the problem cannot be solved merely by military means. We are facing the problem on cultural and social levels as well."

That is not to say Mr. Mubarak is out of danger. If tourist revenues are cut deeply

enough by the violence — the cost last year to Egypt was an estimated \$2 billion — the government's inability to continue social programmes, food subsidies and job creation campaign could provoke an explosion.

It is not clear what inroads fundamentalists have made in the military, the traditional power in Egypt which spawned the assassins of Anwar Sadat. Earlier last month three soldiers, one an officer, were sentenced to death for the attempted assassination of Mr. Mubarak.

The Sunday Times

Morocco predicts 7% growth

RABAT (R) — Moroccan Finance Minister Mohammad Sagou forecast growth of seven per cent this year after two bad years caused by serious droughts which cut the cereal harvest by more than half.

At a midnight news conference, he said, "The indications are that with the prospect of a good harvest this year we can forecast growth of seven per cent."

Droughts were mainly responsible for zero growth last year and negative growth of four per cent in 1992. Widespread and plentiful winter rains have raised hopes of a bumper harvest this season.

The government's (1994) objectives are to keep the treasury deficit to 1.5 per cent of GDP, the current account deficit to 2.1 per cent of GDP and an inflation rate of four per cent. Mr. Sagou said. Inflation was 5.2 per cent last year.

He said foreign exchange reserves rose 13.3 per cent to \$3.8 billion at the end of December, equivalent to seven months imports.

He added that the government expected to raise \$368 million from its ongoing privatisation programme, compared to \$226 million last year.

He said the foreign debt was now \$22 billion or 78 per cent of gross domestic product and servicing it would represent 35 per cent of export earnings this year, or the same ratios as in 1992 before rescheduling.

Japanese consortium to give Iran \$2b credits

NICOSIA (R) — A consortium of Japanese companies will extend Iran's central bank \$2 billion in credit to repay Iran's debts to Japanese firms, the Iran news agency IRNA quoted the head of the central bank as saying Saturday.

IRNA quoted Mohammad Hussein Adeli as saying the interest rate of the credits was five per cent to be paid annually. The total credit will be paid off over 3-12 years starting in 1995, he added.

Mr. Adeli did not name the Japanese consortium and it was not clear if it included companies that were owed money by Iran. Japanese officials were not immediately available for comment.

Mr. Adeli said the Japanese agreement followed a similar accord reached between Iran and Germany two weeks ago.

Mr. Adeli said such agreements will reduce Iran's debt arrears of \$8 billion "as a result of heavy investments in infrastructural projects during the first five year development plan (1987-1992)."

Mr. Adeli said a sharp decline in oil prices and oil revenues lower than those forecast in the first five year plan made it impossible for Iran to repay its debts.

IRNA quoted him as saying Iran had debt repayment problems for political reasons as well.

"The lack of financial cooperation on the part of countries with which Iran had contracts on political ground, created some problems for Iranian companies, forcing them to make their purchases either in cash or on short term credits," he explained.

The agreements with Japan and Germany would halve Iran's debt arrears, Mr. Adeli said.

Tunisia's trade deficit increases by 13%

TUNIS (R) — Tunisia's trade deficit in 1993 increased by 13 per cent over 1992, according to statistics published by the ministry of economy.

The deficit rose to 2.418 million dinars (about \$2.418 million) from 2.139 million dinars (\$2.139 million) in 1992, it said.

Most of the deficit was with European countries. Tunisia's main trade partners. It was 1.416 million dinars (\$1.416 million) in 1993 from 1.272 million (\$1.272 million) in 1992.

Exports earnings amounted to nearly 3.818 million dinars (\$3.818 million) in 1993 from 3.550 million dinars (\$3.550 million) in 1992, an increase of 7.6 per cent.

Imports costs amounted to 6.236 million dinars (\$6.236 million) in 1993 from 5.689 dinars (\$5.689 million) in 1992, an increase of 13 per cent.

The state Centre de Promotion des Exportations says imports increased faster than exports, partly because of exceptional expenditure for equipment to build Tunisia's leg of a new gas pipeline gas from Algeria to Italy for an amount of 96 million dinars (\$96 million).

During 1993, exports earnings covered 61.2 per cent of the cost of imports, compared to 62.4 per cent in 1992.

Euro Disney sees '94 losses despite refinancing

PARIS (R) — Cash-strapped Theme Park Euro Disney has warned shareholders that more losses are on the way in its 1994 fiscal year even if a financial restructuring is agreed by its banks and parent, Walt Disney Co.

In its annual report, obtained by Reuters Friday ahead of Euro Disney's annual meeting on Monday, Chairman Philippe Bourguignon said there would be losses in both the first and second halves of its financial year, which ends on Sept. 30.

"The management thinks that if the restructuring is done, these measures should improve the financial situation of the group. Even so, the group should be in loss for the first and second half of the 1994 fiscal year," Mr. Bourguignon wrote.

Euro Disney crashed to a 5.3 billion franc (\$926.4 million) loss in the year to Sept. 30, 1993 and is now in crucial talks with its 63 banks and Walt Disney Co. on a plan to restructure its mammoth 21 billion franc (\$3.67 billion) debt.

They have until March 31 to reach a decision. Walt Disney has given that date as a deadline when it will stop funding its ailing 49 per cent-owned unit.

But even if a deal is made, Mr. Bourguignon said the package could not be put in place in time to significantly cut Euro Disney's interest costs on debt during its current fiscal year.

"The management does not think a financial restructuring can be put in place in time to obtain a significant reduction in financial costs for the 1994 fiscal year compared with those encountered in the 1993 fiscal year," he wrote in the report.

He said the economic climate was very different from that anticipated in the park's preliminary studies and visits. Hotel occupancy and spending at the park were weaker than expected.

In view of the company's financial situation and the economic climate, plans to build a second movie-related park at Euro Disneyland had to be put on hold until the economic climate improved, Mr. Bourguignon said.

The second park was initially planned for 1995.

Turkey plans new incentives to boost exports

ANKARA (R) — Turkey is planning to introduce new export incentives this month following a further deterioration in its trade balance, treasury officials said Friday.

The foreign trade deficit widened 61.5 per cent to \$838 million in January over the same month of last year, the state Institute of Statistics said. Exports rose only 3.4 per cent to \$1.3 billion while imports surged 20.2 per cent to \$2.2 billion.

The treasury officials said they had submitted proposals for new incentives, including energy subsidies to export industries, to Prime Minister Tansu Ciller's coalition cabinet.

Manufacturers would pay 25 per cent less for natural gas, liquefied petroleum gas and water. They would also be exempted from import taxes and customs duties on fuel oil purchases.

An overvalued lira and economic recession in Turkey's main trading partners have slowed exports since 1990.

The 1993 trade deficit was \$14.08 billion, up 72.6 per cent from \$8.16 billion in 1992. Exports rose 4.3 per cent to \$15.35 billion and imports 28.7 per cent to \$29.43 billion.

The export-to-import ratio, a key indicator of a country's trade performance, fell to 52.1 per cent, its lowest since 1980.

The lira, weakened by a financial crisis, has lost 28.6 per cent of its dollar value this year.

Mr. Bourguignon admitted that Euro Disney had been caught out by a number of unexpected elements during its first year of operations. The park opened in April 1992.

"This first full year of operations has shown the seasonal character of our activity is even more marked than expected, with about two thirds of admissions to the Theme Park sold during the second half of the year," Mr. Bourguignon wrote.

He said the economic climate was very different from that anticipated in the park's preliminary studies and visits. Hotel occupancy and spending at the park were weaker than expected.

In view of the company's financial situation and the economic climate, plans to build a second movie-related park at Euro Disneyland had to be put on hold until the economic climate improved, Mr. Bourguignon said.

The second park was initially planned for 1995.

U.S.-Japan phone pact ends 'ten years of frustration'

TOKYO (R) — U.S. ambassador to Japan Walter Mondale Saturday hailed an accord on a cellular phone dispute between Washington and Tokyo, saying "we end 10 years of frustration."

Mr. Mondale brushed aside suggestions that the phone row was a minor item when weighed against Japan's overall trade surplus of about \$130 billion.

He told a late night news conference it was significant that an agreement had been reached.

Japan's Post and Telecommunications Minister Takenori Kanazaki told the news conference he hoped the deal would help improve relations between the two countries.

The agreement between Motorola and Nippon Iddou Tsushin Corp (IDO) was struck only five days before a deadline for likely trade sanctions by the United States.

Mr. Mondale said the agreement would create jobs in the United States and Japan and would introduce competition.

"Everybody is going to benefit," he said.

Japan's deputy posts and telecommunications minister Masahito Tani said IDO would have to invest 62 billion yen (\$590 million) to implement an accord giving Motorola increased access to the Tokyo-Nagoya cellular phone market.

Mr. Tani told a news conference shareholders of IDO including Japan's largest carmaker, Toyota, wanted to help IDO to raise funds, Toyota holds about 13 per cent of IDO.

The phone row was the immediate flashpoint in a larger trade stand-off between the world's two biggest economies.

Motorola Vice-President Arnold Brenner said the accord with IDO on access to Japan's cellular phone market would lead to increased earnings worth "several hundred million dollars."

Mr. Brenner told a news conference that he was happy with the contents of the agreement. "We are certainly satisfied with the idea of better access to the market. We certainly have achieved that. Both Motorola and the U.S. government are happy."

A glum IDO Vice President Toshio Enomoto told the same news conference that there were some benefits for his company in the deal but added that IDO would likely suffer a deterioration in earnings in fiscal 1995/96 ending March 31.

The dispute erupted on Feb. 15 after Motorola and IDO failed to reach an agreement on capital investment, and the U.S. firm complained that it had been deprived of a chance to boost its share in the most lucrative areas in Japan.

On Friday, Motorola and IDO hammered out a framework that would allow Motorola to sharply expand its access to Japan's cellular phone market.

Under the deal, IDO will construct 159 base stations for Motorola-system cellular phones by late 1995, a year and a half earlier than IDO's original plan.

That would give Motorola 269 stations in the densely populated Tokyo-Nagoya corridor, which would fulfil most of Motorola's request for expanded infrastructure, an IDO spokesman said Thursday.

Industry analysts say the accord would force IDO to make costly new investments over the next 18 months, double IDO's original plan, putting further strain on its fragile financial status.

IDO is capitalised at 11.4 billion yen (\$108 million) and is already burdened by long-term and short-term borrowings of 230 billion yen (\$2.19 billion).

Since it was set up in 1987, IDO has spent 280 billion yen (\$2.66 billion) to expand the service area for Motorola.

Spain leads Europe in unemployment

MADRID (AP) — Spain leads its richer European neighbours in one economic field, but doesn't boast about it: None of the others comes close to its unemployment rate of 18 per cent.

The National Employment Office now lists 2.77 million people as unemployed, or 17.96 per cent of the work force, up 250,000 from a year ago and half a million more than 1992.

A quarterly survey by the National Statistics Institute, in which interviewers visit 60,000 households, puts the total unemployed at 3.68 million, or 23.9 per cent.

By some estimates, the underground economy accounts for nearly one-fourth of Spain's gross domestic product, the total output of goods and services.

Many employers are said to be holding off hiring until the passage of new legislation, possibly this summer, that would make it easier to fire, transfer or retrain workers.

Meanwhile, work is hard to find. "I look in want ads, ask friends, I go to warehouses," said Francisco Javier Garcia, 27, who lost his job in January as a deliveryman at a trucking company. "They tell me they need to fire more people."

Like a generation of Spaniards who flocked to menial jobs in northern Europe in the 1960s and 1970s, he is waiting to hear from a company that might send him abroad as a waiter or chauffeur.

While the Blanc plan tries to catch up with competitors such as British Airways, KLM and Lufthansa which have already acted to cut costs, it does not prepare the airline for the changes in market structure once deregulation really hits, senior analyst Campbell Poole at Mitsubishi Bank in Paris said.

The future market will intensify competition both inside the French domestic market and across Europe, and profitability will be even more difficult under those conditions, analysts said.

In the meantime Air France has to win over both its employees and the European Commission to its plan.

Trade unions have generally responded positively to the plan although the CGT, the second biggest union at the airline, said it was unwilling to sign, denouncing as blackmail the government's decision to link the recapitalisation with approval by employees of the restructuring plan. The unions have until March 28 to decide a final response to the plan.

The plan also needs to meet strict European Union (EU) competition rules. The EU wants to cut subsidies, which it says distort competition in the skies. A panel of EU "wise men" in February recommended a strict diet of competition and an easing of state aid to the sector.

Donors give Cambodia \$773m aid

TOKYO (R) — Major donor nations pledged a total of \$773 million in emergency aid to Cambodia Friday after an international meeting highlighted the country's ongoing war against poverty, land mines and banditry.

With the war over, Cambodia is struggling to build up its fledgling economy almost from scratch.

"It would have been in vain, in fact, to have considered as 'global' any peace process which did not address the rehabilitation and reconstruction of Cambodia," first prime minister Prince Norodom Ranariddh said in his closing speech.

The second International Committee on the Reconstruction of Cambodia (ICROC) grouped 31 donor nations and 12 international bodies. The next meeting will be held in Paris in 1995.

Participants said the \$773 million figure had been inflated by pledging of funds committed at two previous meetings on Cambodia in Paris and Tokyo, but which had not yet been disbursed.

Previous pledges include \$880 million promised at the Tokyo meeting in June 1992 and \$119 million at the first ICROC in Paris last September.

Of the \$773 million total, \$486 million was earmarked for 1994, \$271 million for 1995 and an additional \$15.77 million for land mine clearance.

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A Bophuthatswana resident salutes South African Defence Force (SADF) soldiers arriving to guard the embassy in Mafikeng, in South Africa's only recognised independent homeland (AFP photo)

She singled out rumours started by a newsletter put out by the Washington consulting firm Johnson Smick, which is run by Republican political operative David Smick and Manuel Johnson, an official in

Romario describes Pele as 'mentally retarded'

RIO DE JANEIRO (R) — Barcelona and Brazil striker Romario was quoted by the Brazilian press Friday as saying that soccer legend Pele was "mentally retarded."

The Jornal Do Brasil newspaper and Globo Television both said that Romario had made the remark in Spain in response to earlier comments by Pele that Brazil should not depend too heavily on the diminutive Barcelona striker.

Globo also said Romario had called Pele a "museum piece."

Romario was also quoted as repeating his criticism of Sao Paulo striker Muller, saying "he definitely should not be in the national team."

In January, Romario caused controversy by saying he wanted himself, Deportivo la Coruna's Bebeto and Palmeiras striker Edmundo to form Brazil's attack in the

World Cup and that Muller only ever played well in club soccer.

The Jornal Do Brasil added that Romario had taken back the comments on Pele in a later telephone interview. Although he was still annoyed by what he saw as criticism from Pele.

Pele, who is in Brazil, was quoted as saying in reply: "All he (Romario) has done recently is attack people, which worries me... He is a great goal-scorer but that is not enough."

Romario's comments followed Pele's public row with International Football Federation (FIFA) President Joao Havelange.

Pele commented: "I'm fed up with controversies with Joao Havelange and the Brazilian Football Confederation and I don't want to waste time with Romario. He can talk as much rubbish as he wants. It doesn't bother me."

World Cup officials suggest alcohol ban

CHICAGO (R) — World Cup officials, keen to prevent any crowd trouble at the championship, have suggested that venue cities ban the sale and consumption of alcohol before matches this summer.

But, with one leading beer-maker and World Cup marketing partner reportedly criticizing the idea as "un-American," officials were eager Friday to stress that the recommendation was only that.

"This is purely a suggestion," stated Sue Carpenter, press officer of the Los Angeles venue that hosts matches from the first round through the final on July 17.

She confirmed that the World Cup USA Chairman Alan Rothenberg had written to government officials at the nine venue cities mentioning various measures that would be considered routine elsewhere in the world.

A similar ban, designed to prevent outbreaks of drunken soccer hooliganism, was introduced at the 1990 World Cup in Italy, although it had limited success.

Details of Rothenberg's letter were published in Friday's edition of the USA Today newspaper under the headline "World Cup officials debate alcohol ban" with reported criticism from leading sponsor and brewer Anheuser-Busch.

"If fans could not freely buy and consume alcoholic beverages at bars and from liquor stores before the game, the chances that we could have an absolutely incident-free event increase dramatically," Rothenberg wrote.

The idea did not find much favour in a country where beer-drinking at ball games is as much a part of the occasion as dancing cheerleaders and hot dogs.

"Obviously once this gets out into the city here I'm sure its going to cause quite a stir," said press officer Jim Frosolid in Chicago, a city legendary for "speakeasy" bars during the prohibition years of the 1920s.

Joe Castellano, Anheuser-Busch's vice president for consumer awareness, was quoted as saying in USA Today that "this is a solution in search of a problem. It's an un-American concept that's not going to solve anything."

"It doesn't treat the patrons with much respect. It will inspire people to sneak drinks in or buy them the day before."

Wilander falls in first round of Lipton tourney

KEY BISCAYNE, Florida (R) — Mats Wilander of Sweden, winner of the Lipton Championships in 1988, lost in the first round of the event Friday.

Wilander, playing in his sixth tournament and 10th match of the year, was defeated in his opening match at the \$3.3 million hardcourt event by unseeded American Alex O'Brien 6-3 7-6 (7-3).

Wilander, who is also unseeded and is ranked 212th in the world, now has a won-lost record for the year of 5-5.

Another yesterday's hero became today's casualty as South African Marcos Ondruska, a semifinalist in the tournament a year ago, was defeated by Australia's Jamie Morgan in the first round.

Wilander started slowly against O'Brien, trailing 5-0 in the first set before winning three games in a row. But the effort came too late as O'Brien turned up the aggression and put away the first set 6-3 with an ace.

The Swede came within two points of seizing the second set when he led 6-5 and 30-30. But the consistent O'Brien, who relished Wilander's backcourt style, simply rallied steadily

with the Swede, waiting for an opening.

He found it in the tiebreak, setting up match point after putting away a forehand winner to close out a long rally. He took the match when Wilander netted a forehand volley.

"I played all right after the first five games," said Wilander, who is taking his comeback more seriously after playing sparingly in 1993. "I was playing a little too loose on the big points in the second set."

The 29-year-old Swede said he has resigned himself to the grind of tour travel in order to improve.

"You have to win matches to enjoy it and the only way to win matches is to play a lot of tournaments," Wilander said. "But I've decided to stay in America mostly. Then the travel is not too bad."

Ondruska, ranked 72nd, was soundly beaten by the 71st-ranked Morgan 6-2 6-3.

Ondruska had topped Michael Chang and Michael Stich on his way to last year's semifinal. But his first serve deserted him against Morgan.

The Australian attacked Ondruska's weak second serve



Mats Wilander

and passed the South African mercilessly.

The victory was sweet for Morgan, whose nerve was shattered during a catastrophic fourth-round loss to countryman Wally Masur at last

year's U.S. Open when he squandered a 5-0 lead in the fifth set.

Since then, Morgan has struggled, and has suffered six straight losses in the first or second round this year.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Kasparov denies cheating in Spain

LONDON (R) — World chess champion Garry Kasparov has denied a claim by an opponent that he cheated during a tournament in Spain, a British newspaper said Saturday. "My conscience is clear," the Times of London quoted Kasparov as saying. The newspaper said Judit Polgar, a Hungarian chess prodigy, had accused Kasparov of taking his hand off a piece, then changing his mind and moving it again. This would be a major infringement of international chess rules. The Times said a Spanish television company, PVS, had videotaped the incident and confirmed Polgar was right. "I definitely saw that Kasparov moved his knight to C5. But then took it back," the newspaper quoted Romanian grandmaster Elisabeth Polihroniadis as saying. But Carlos Falcon, chief arbiter at the Linares tournament, said Kasparov had not taken his hand off the knight.

Indy speedway to launch racing series

INDIANAPOLIS (AP) — The Indianapolis Motor Speedway will set up a schedule and rules for a new racing series, challenging Indy car racing, Speedway President Tony George said Friday. George said the new series could begin as early as the 1996 season and will include the same cars and drivers that compete in the Indianapolis 500. Car governs the PPG Indy car series and sanctions every race except Indianapolis, which is run by the U.S. Auto Club. "I have personally made every effort the past two years to work with the car owner organisation currently governing the series in order to hear and be heard with regard to the direction the series is heading," George said. "I have come to the conclusion that the speedway and the current car owner organisation are simply going in different directions." He did not elaborate.

Fundamentalists try to ban women's tournament

NEW DELHI, India (AP) — A Muslim fundamentalist group has urged the cancellation of a women's volleyball tournament in eastern India, saying it is against Islamic laws for women to play, news reports said Saturday. Members of Jamaat-E-Ulema have threatened the organisers with "dire consequences" if they do not cancel the meet, scheduled to start Monday, the pioneer newspaper reported in a report from Calcutta. The area, in west Bengal state, is dominated by Muslims, and tournament organisers fear the edict might frighten participants. Some Ulema members visited the homes of some of the organisers and participants asking them to give up the idea. The tournament was to mark the Muslim eid, which is celebrated at the end of the fasting month of Ramadan. It was not immediately known if the organisers will cancel the tournament, in which several volleyball teams from the state were expected to take part. Muslim Ulema make up 12 per cent of India's 880 million people. They are, however, in majority in some pockets in rural west Bengal. Hindus make up 82 per cent of the country's population.

China agrees to probe match-fixing charges

BEIJING (R) — China said Saturday it had formed a panel to investigate Asian Football Confederation allegations of match-fixing by members of both its national squad and top club, Liaoning.

Confederation Secretary General Peter Vellapan said Thursday the national team and club champions Liaoning might have been paid off by a syndicate of Thai bookmakers.

A spokesman for the Chinese Football Association said it took the allegations seriously and immediately formed a board of inquiry. China's official Xinhua news agency reported.

The charges involve China's participation in the King's Cup in Thailand last month, and Liaoning's match in the Asian club championship finals, which were held in Bangkok in January and February.

Vellapan, speaking in Kuala Lumpur, said bookies were staying with the teams in the

official hotel and it had obviously affected their performances on the pitch.

"All this time we thought this cancerous disease was confined to this (Southeast Asian) region," Vellapan said. "Now I've been informed it has spread to the Chinese team."

The Liaoning squad from the northeastern Chinese province of the same name reached the Asian club semifinals, but lost 4-1 to a side from Oman. It then fell by the same score to Japan's Yomiuri Nippon in the third-place playoff.

China's national team won, drew and lost in its three games in the King's Cup.

"We have people watching the games — technical experts who watch the matches and comment on the performance of the teams," Vellapan said.

"We also have people stayed in the hotels and noticed bookies befriending the team," he said.

Coach slaps sex ban on World Cup players

GENEVA (R) — A sex ban has been imposed on Switzerland's World Cup players for the forthcoming finals in the United States.

"I want my players to concentrate totally on football with all their strength," said the Swiss national coach, Englihammer Roy Hodgson.

He has ordered his squad to stay celibate from June 7 when they leave for a friendly against Bolivia in Montreal June 11. Switzerland's opening match of the finals is against hosts the United States in Detroit June 18.

The Swiss tabloid Blick ran a front-page story on Hodgson's decision Friday and quoted him as saying: "This is not a pleasure trip. I will not tolerate any wives or girlfriends in the squad's hotel."

Nagano locals face Olympic fears

YO (AFP) — Locals are worried that the next Winter Olympics could cause big trouble for the Japanese mountain city of Nagano by creating recession, corruption and ecological opposition.

"We must give up the games which will only benefit builders," Nagano city assembly member Juichiro Imai has said.

"It will be financially impossible for us to repay all the debt. Construction of new facilities will destroy the natural environment," he said.

The city of 340,000, a three hours' express train ride from Tokyo, will be at the core of Olympic sites scattered as far apart as 60 kilometres in a scenic apple-growing region amid the mountains called the Japanese Alps.

But the independent legislator said the city had seen its annual budget jump 70 per cent from the previous year to 160 billion yen (\$1.5 billion) in the year to March 31, largely due to rising construction costs.

Half of the construction costs will be borne by the national government and the rest by the municipal and provincial bodies.

According to initial plans, 80 per cent of the new facilities, including the Olympic village and the administrative headquarters, would have been complete now. But construction work on most of them has just begun.

While the organisers need to newly build 12 of the 20 venues for the last winter games of the century, Nagano will have its first top-rate hotel rising 17 stories in the city known for a 1,300-year-old Buddhist temple.

Imai said the city's debt for Olympic construction totalled 135 billion yen and was expected to exceed 200 billion yen in the future. "We will be repaying 20-30 billion yen for 15 years after the games."

Meanwhile, local administrators and organisers are working hard amid the prolonged recession to solicit funds for the Olympic operation cost, which was set at 76 billion yen in 1991 but needed to be re-assessed.

The lavish spending set by the organisers when they spent an estimated \$11 million bidding for the games seems to be continuing with Mayor Tasuku Tsukada touring Liffhammer with provincial governor Goro Yoshimura and 420 delegates from the 1998 Olympic organising committee and local interests last February.

Imai, 66, a former executive of a state financial institution,

who lost to Tsukada in 1985 city mayor election, charged that Nagano had stole the games "by dint of money" and that "the Olympics have been meant for builders from the very beginning."

A group of 57 citizens has filed a lawsuit, demanding Nagano return 920 million yen in taxpayers' money which has been given as subsidies to the committee which bid for the Nagano Olympics. But the local court last month found all the account books on the bidding expenses had gone missing.

A series of scandals elsewhere, in which contractors bribed local administrators also casts a cloud on the Olympic efforts.

The signing of a contract on construction work on the venue for bobsled and luge has been delayed because one of its contractors has been suspended for two

Sonics, Hawks reassert supremacy

SAN ANTONIO, Texas (R) — The Seattle SuperSonics and Atlanta Hawks reasserted supremacy in their conference Friday, Seattle on a last-gasp thriller over San Antonio and Atlanta with a rout of Chicago.

In San Antonio, Gary Payton's 18-foot jumper from the left baseline with 1.2 seconds remaining lifted the SuperSonics to a 100-99 victory over the Spurs.

Seattle trailed 97-94 with just over two minutes left. But took a one-point lead on baskets by Shawn Kemp and Payton.

Willie Anderson's tip-in put San Antonio up 98-98 with 1.1 seconds left. But Payton followed with the game-winner.

Kemp had 23 points and Detlef Schrempf added 22 for Seattle, which has won seven of its last eight games and improved its league-best record to 44-15.

In Atlanta, the Hawks, led by Kevin Willis's 23 points and 15 rebounds, trounced the Chicago Bulls 108-77, snapping a two-game losing streak and avenging Tuesday's 113-95 loss at Chicago.

Scottie Pippen led an anaemic Bulls attack with 18 points as Chicago lost for the sixth time in seven games.

The win kept the Hawks (42-18) one game up in the Eastern Conference ahead of

the Knicks (41-19), who had beaten them in Atlanta Wednesday, and four in front of Chicago (38-22) in the Central Division.

In Boston, Patrick Ewing had 28 points and Hubert Davis scored 25 on 10-for-11 shooting, 5-for-5 from 3-point range, to carry the New York Knicks to their fifth straight win, 90-83 over the Celtics.

The Celtics have lost 14 of their last 16 games.

At Detroit, Greg Anderson hit a dunk and Joe Dumars nailed two free throws with less than a minute left to lift the Pistons to a 98-90 triumph over the Cleveland Cavaliers, snapping the Cavs' club record-setting 11-game win streak.

Detroit posted consecutive victories for the first time since Dec. 18 and 19.

At Minnesota, Alonzo Mourning had 20 points, 14 rebounds and six blocks as the Charlotte Hornets celebrated Larry Johnson's return with a 97-91 win over the Timberwolves.

Johnson scored 10 points in 17 minutes in his first game since damaging a nerve in his back Dec. 27. Charlotte went 9-31 in his absence. Mourning had returned Tuesday after a 15-game absence.

At New Jersey, Benoit Benjamin had 25 points and 12 rebounds and Derrick Cole-

man scored 18 to lead the Nets to a 87-73 triumph over the Indiana Pacers.

Reggie Miller, the lone Pacer in double figures, had 26 points as Indiana suffered only its fourth loss in 19 games.

At Washington, Brent Price capped a career night by hitting a key 3-pointer with 1:18 left in the fourth quarter as the Bullets beat the Denver Nuggets 104-93.

Price, making his first start of the season in place of the injured Michael Adams, had career highs with 19 points and 14 assists. His 3-pointer put Washington up to stay, 44-41.

In Miami, Kevin Johnson had 17 points and a season-high 17 assists. Cedric Ceballos added 28 points and 12 rebounds and Dan Majerle scored 26 points as the Phoenix Suns coasted to a 122-107 victory over the Heat.

In Orlando, the Magic raced to a 36-18 lead after one quarter and cruised past the Philadelphia 76ers 112-105.

Shaquille O'Neal had 28 points and 21 rebounds, while Nick Anderson and Arneferne Hardaway scored 21 each for the Magic.

In Los Angeles, Dominique Wilkins scored 31 and Ron Harper recorded his fourth career triple-double as the Clippers beat the Dallas Mavericks for the 11th time.

GOREN BRIDGE

WITH OMAR SHARIF & TAMMAM HIRSH
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WHERE'S THE RUFF?

East-West vulnerable. South deals.

NORTH
♠ Q 8 6 4
♥ A 7
♦ K 3
♣ K 4 3 2

EAST
♠ A 10 2
♥ K Q J 8 3
♦ Q 10 6 5
♣ 8

SOUTH
♠ 3
♥ 6 5
♦ A J 8 7 4
♣ A Q J 10 6

The bidding:
South West North East
1♠ 1♥ 1♠ Pass
2♠ Pass 4♠ Pass
5♠ Pass Pass Pass

Opening lead: King of ♠

There are several ways to try to set up a side suit. The obvious are by finessing for a missing honor or ruffing one or two rounds in the hope of setting up a long card or two. Both run risks: The first that the finessing might lose; the other that the enemy might overruff. South found a surer way to make use of a side suit on this deal.

North-South did well to stay out of no trump. That contract would probably have been defeated two tricks when declarer took the diamond finesse in a vain attempt to find a ninth trick.

Against five clubs West led the king of hearts. With two sure losers in the major suits, the contract appeared to hinge on losing no diamond tricks. Had declarer tried either line suggested in the opening paragraph, the contract would have gone down to defeat. Similarly, had declarer drawn trumps a diamond loser would have been inevitable. South found a pretty way to land the club game.

After winning the ace of hearts at trick one, declarer cashed the king and ace of diamonds and led a third round. Instead of ruffing, however, declarer discarded the table's losing heart! This simple tactic killed the defense.

No matter what West did when in with the ten of diamonds, declarer was in control. West chose to exit with a trump. Declarer won in hand, ruffed a heart with a low trump, and returned to diamond with the king of trumps. After conceding a spade, declarer was able to regain the lead with a ruff, draw the last trump and cash the good diamond for the fulfilling trick.

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The restaurant's management is pleased to announce to its customers the grand opening of the newly refurbished restaurant which will offer you the most delicious Mexican dishes in one of the most romantic atmospheres.

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Note: Special discount of 25% on the occasion of the grand opening and for holders of this advertisement.

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Cinema	PHILADELPHIA	PLAZA	CONCORD	AMMOUN THEATRE	Nabil Al Hashimi Theatre	ANLAN THEATRE
TO DAY	Jean-Claude Van Damme HARD TARGET Shows: 11:00, 1:00, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30	Adel Emam in TERRORIST Shows: 10:00, 12:30, 3:00, 5:00, 6:45, 8:30, 10:30	CONCORD '1' Sylvester Stallone — in Demolition Man Shows: 12:30, 3:00, 6:30, 8:30, 10:30 CONCORD '2' Women of Desire Shows: 5:30, 7:00, 8:45, 10:30 Special film for children Dennis The Menace Shows: 11:30 a.m., 1:30, 3:00 p.m.	Opening Soon A political comedy Forbidden X Forbidden	presents a play entitled: Al Ima Karon A popular political comedy Actors: Abeer Issa, Daoud Jalajel, Hassan Al Shaer, Foad Shomali in addition to other comedians Every night at 8:15 Tickets are sold all day Coming soon: The next play	Nabil and Hisham Theatre presents Ahlan Arab Summit Conference (play) daily at 9:15 p.m. Theatre is closed Sundays, Monday and Tuesdays

Only certainty for Somalia appears to be more violence

By Terry Leonard
The Associated Press

MOGADISHU — Departing American soldiers lounged against their duffel bags while automatic weapons fire rattled a few hundred metres away, outside the main airport gate.

Somali factions were settling a dispute with volleys of fire. Neither the Americans nor the remaining U.N. peacekeepers knew or cared what it was about or who won.

More than a year after American and U.N. troops waded ashore in Somalia, the country is still an armed camp, with no government and little chance of creating one soon.

U.S. troops are scheduled to withdraw from Somalia by March 25, and other nations also have announced they will pull out from the peacekeeping mission. A U.N. force of more than 19,000 soldiers will remain, two-thirds of them from India, Pakistan and Egypt.

General John Shalikashvili, the U.S. joint chiefs of staff chairman, was due here Saturday to praise the troops for helping end Somalia's famine.

Now the country's future depends to a great extent on its two principal warlords, Gen. Mohammed Farah Aided and Ali Mahdi Mohammed. They talk peace and reconciliation, but pursue the goal along different and seemingly non-intersecting paths.

"Warlords, as long as they can be king, will be king of nothing," Maj. Gen. Thomas Montgomery, the U.S. com-

mander, said in an interview. "The warlords are more interested in power than peace."

Foreign diplomats and U.N. officials still try to keep Somalia talks moving. But their optimism fades as more countries pull out peacekeepers.

"Even if we are incredibly successful, this country will still be a mess," said Ambassador Richard Begosian, the U.S. special envoy to Somalia.

Tuesday's fighting in Mogadishu and other factional clashes in Merca and Kismayu were seen as a glimpse of things to come after the withdrawal of American and West European troops this spring.

Somali faction leaders might be able to avoid a return to the all-out civil war that produced famine and anarchy, reduced much of the country to ruin and left 350,000 Somalis dead. But diplomats, aid workers and military officers believe there will be factional fighting as Somalis settle old scores and hammer out the fine points of their negotiations.

Unpaid militias abound, surviving — in polite military terminology — by foraging. It is called sacking and looting by everyone else, but it is the way warlords keep their armies. And to keep them, they must let them fight.

Abdul Karim Ahmad Ali, the secretary-general of Gen. Aided's Somali National Alliance, argues that U.N. forces cannot prevent Somalis from fighting. He also said he believed negotiations be-

tween the faction leaders would be successful and there will be no fighting after the troops leave.

As he spoke, his words were nearly drowned out by gunfire.

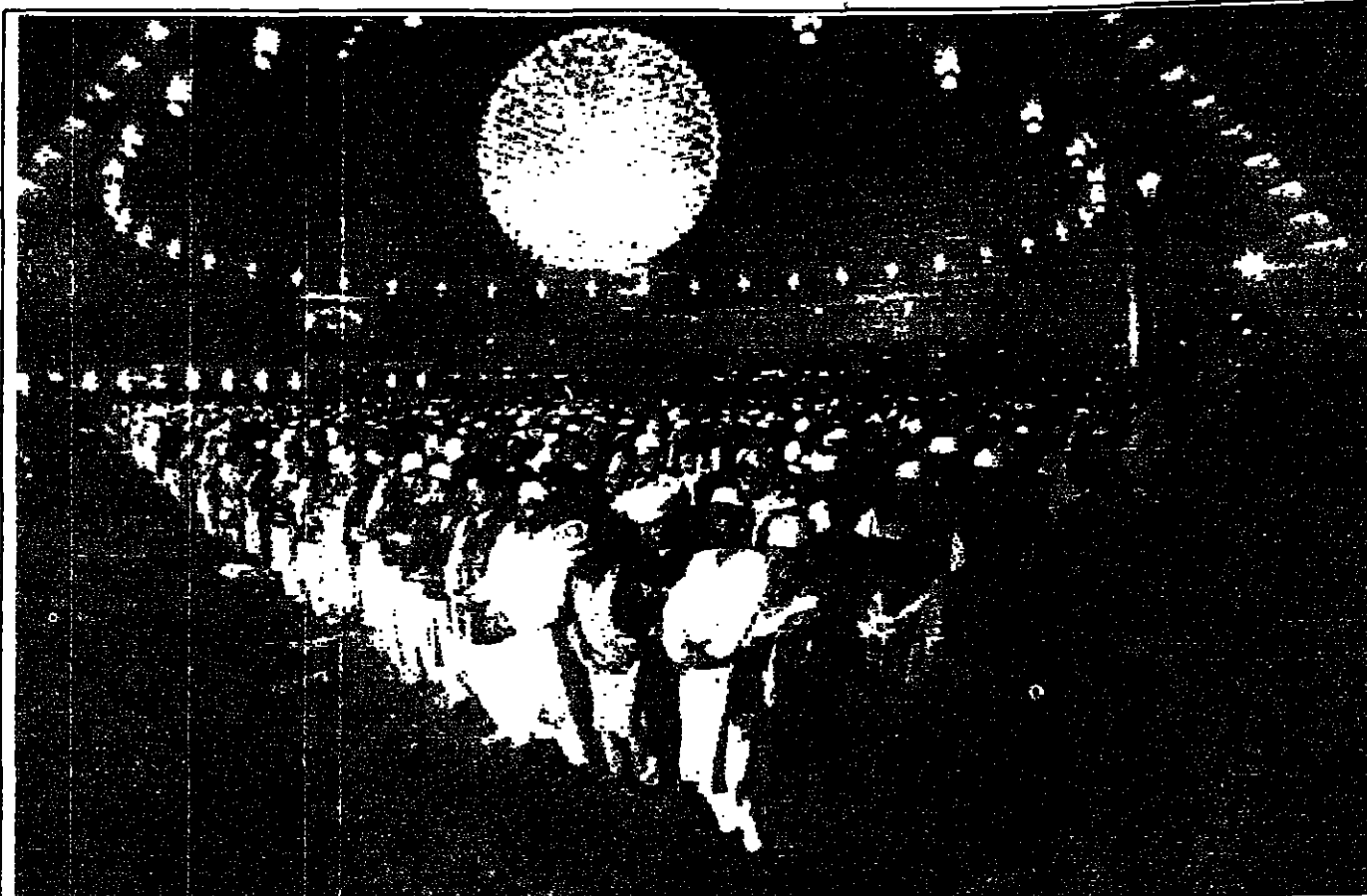
Mr. Begosian, the U.S. envoy, said the signals for the future are mixed. Negotiations give reason for hope, but the gaps between the factions are wide, and no one is convinced the warlords are ready to set aside personal ambitions in order to compromise.

The ambitious U.N. plan for nation-building has been scaled down. The United Nations wanted to create district and regional councils leading to a transitional national government. But the plan has been thwarted by clan disputes.

Even plans for a police force are threatened. The factions are squabbling over the makeup of a 10,000-member Somali police force to fight rising crime. Bill Kirk, the Australian police superintendent training the force, said the United Nations may not be able to sustain it.

Mr. Begosian said he believes there is an overwhelming desire for peace among the Somali people. But he notes it is not a country with any democratic traditions.

Gen. Montgomery said he is not optimistic about the long term. "What happens here now I don't know," he said. He predicted that if Gen. Aided does not end up dominant, "we will see more factional disputes and violence."



LAST PRAYERS OF RAMADAN: Pakistani Muslims perform the last special prayers of Ramadan at the Shah Faisal Mosque in Islamabad, Karachi, Pakistan, along with the rest of the Muslim

World, begins celebrating the 'Eid Al Fitr feast today (Sunday) (AFP photo)

Hundreds of Algerians escape from jail

ALGIERS (AP) — At least 400 prisoners, some Islamic radicals sentenced to death, escaped from a prison in eastern Algeria in an attack by an armed group, well-placed sources said.

The Thursday night attack, reportedly mounted by Islamic guerrillas, is the most spectacular operation since the start of a two-year-old insurgency by the extremists aimed at toppling the military-backed government.

Authorities did not immediately confirm the attack on the prison in Lambese, also known as Tazoult, in the Aurès mountains. The isolated prison is used to house dangerous criminals.

A vast search operation that included helicopters was launched in the region, about 400 kilometres southeast of Algiers, according to the sources, state employees in Bama, capital of the Aurès region.

The sources, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the attack came as prisoners broke the daily fast that marks the Holy Month of Ramadan. The French news agency Agence France-Presse, citing unnamed sources, reported that as many as 1,000 people escaped. It said four guards were killed.

It was the third prison attack in two years. A 1991 attack on the military prison at Blida, south of Algiers, freed 103 prisoners, most of whom were caught.

The attack climaxes what has been an exceptionally vicious month in the insurgency. Three noted intellectuals were killed since the start of Ramadan Feb. 12 and five wounded.

An estimated 3,700 people — Islamic militants, security forces and civilians — have been killed since January 1992, when a military coup halted legislative elections to thwart a Muslim fundamentalist victory.

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Arab-Americans press for U.S. pressure on Israel

WASHINGTON (USIA) — An emotional memorial service for recent victims of violence in the Middle East brought renewed calls for the United States to bring pressure on Israel and the Arab countries to seek a lasting peace.

The ceremony, sponsored by the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee and other Arab-American organizations, was held March 10 in a Senate conference room in the U.S. Capitol. Muslim, Christian and Jewish clergy and members of Congress packed the room to offer prayers for the victims of the Feb. 25 massacre at the Ibrahim Mosque in Hebron and those killed two days later at the Cathedral Notre Dame De La Deliverance, in Jounieh, Lebanon.

Speaking on behalf of the Clinton administration, Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott sent a letter expressing "horror and outrage that such acts could be committed, particularly against those engaged in acts of worship."

"I share this sentiment, as well as the conviction that only the realization of full peace in the region can bring an end to this senseless loss of life," Mr. Talbott said.

Congressman James P. Moran of Virginia warned that "this type of atrocity will continue unless the United States exerts its leverage free of political considerations, but motivated by the principles of justice and human rights."

He urged Israeli and Arab leaders "to act with a sense of urgency, fairness and, above all, principled courage."

Also participating in the memorial ceremony was House Majority Whip David Bonior of Michigan, who called on all men and women of good will "no matter how difficult it might be to gain understanding, to set aside our passions of anger and distrust and leave behind our feeling of suspicion and doubt.... Only by carrying out this response can we assure that the dead have not died in vain."

Congressman John D. Dingell of Michigan cautioned that terrorism cannot be allowed to continue, nor can the actions "of a few terrorists... deny the people of the Middle East the peace they deserve."

Quoting former U.S. President Woodrow Wilson, who said: "Only peace between peoples can last," Mr. Dingell stressed that the people of the Middle East must create a peace based "on justice and a firm, continuing respect for the rights of all."

Albert Mohr, president of the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee, read a number of statements

sent to the committee by Senator Carl Levin of Michigan, Senator Donald W. Riegle Jr. of Michigan, Senator Paul Simon of Illinois and the Reverend Jesse L. Jackson.

Statements of concern also came from Massoud Maalouf, charge d'affaires at the Lebanese embassy, and Imam Ghayth Khashi, chairman of the Council of Imams of Washington, D.C.

Hasan Abdul Rahman, the Palestine Liberation Organisation representative in Washington, called on Israel and the international community to take steps to guarantee the safety of Palestinians in the occupied territories.

He stressed that "peace has to be made between the Palestinian people and the Israeli people... That's why today we should join together in committing ourselves to the struggle against racism, hatred and violence and those who encourage those kinds of acts...."

An invocation was delivered by Imam Anwar Hajjaj, while Msgr. Dominic Ashkar of Our Lady of Lebanon Maronite Catholic Church in Washington delivered the benediction.

The memorial service ended with a prayer for peace from Rabbi Gerald Sewotta, of the Hill Foundation of George Washington University.

Arab World must build strong civil societies, says author Viorst

WASHINGTON (USIA) — The Arab world must build a strong civil society if it hopes to be an active and effective player in the international community, says Milton Viorst, a noted author and journalist.

Mr. Viorst discussed the future of the Arab World during a March 9 book review session of his most recent publication, *Sandcastles: The Arabs In Search of A Modern World*. The session was sponsored by the Foreign Correspondents Association in Washington, D.C.

Mr. Viorst was joined by Pierre Salinger, former press secretary for President John F. Kennedy and Paris bureau chief for ABC News. Mr. Salinger's most recent book also focuses on the Middle East: *The Hidden Agenda Behind the Gulf Crisis* was published in 1991.

Sandcastles is a collection of articles Mr. Viorst wrote for *The New Yorker* magazine from the 1980s to the present. The book covers Iraq, Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, Kuwait, Jordan, the Palestinians and Turkey.

Praising *Sandcastles*, Pierre Salinger said, "the book should be read by as many Americans as possible so they can understand the very fragile situation" the Arab World finds itself in today.

The title of his book underscores this political and social fragility, Mr. Viorst said. "Outlining the book's themes, Mr. Viorst said the Arab World has entered a phase in its history that is marked both by uncertainty and turmoil. First dominated by colonial powers and then by conflict with Israel, the Arab World is

now seeking its own identity, he said.

To fulfill this search, the region must look inward, Mr. Viorst said. The Arabs are "moving into an era where what will be asked of them is a lot of internal reexamination and careful scrutiny of who they are themselves."

Peace with Israel is a corollary to this new focus: "Zionism has been the one big cause about which all of Arab society has been willing to unite.... I think the Arab World has reached a consensus and it is saying now that it can no longer tie its own hands by this obsession with Zionism," he said.

This consensus, however, "doesn't change the general fragility of what characterises these societies," Mr. Viorst said. "They are not strong societies."

Years of conflict with Israel strengthened the region's military forces at the expense of its institutions of civil society, Mr. Viorst said. The Arab World must now focus on strengthening its civil society if it hopes to be an effective player in the international community, he stressed.

How will the Arab World go about attaining this goal? Which ideology — Islam, democracy, Arab nationalism — and what groups — secular governments, Islamists — will prevail? These are questions that are at the heart of the present struggle in the Arab World, Mr. Viorst said.

"What we are facing is a conflict of great ideas in the

Arab World... The Arabs are thrashing around in search of an identity. But they are pretty far from reaching it and I would guess that we are in for a lot of turmoil in the Arab World."

Mr. Viorst argued for following Western models of institution building:

The Arabs "should take whatever course they want. But let's face it, if you don't emulate the West in terms of building up strong institutions of society, you are going to be a bystander to what the rest of the world is doing — as the Arabs have been bystanders for the last 75 years," since the collapse of the Ottoman Empire.

While noting recent successful experiments with democracy in the region, Mr. Viorst said democratisation is not the wave of the future for the Arabs, at least in the near term.

"I know there are many intellectuals, who looking at Jordan and the thus far reasonably successful experiment of Kingdom with democracy, are saying that the 1990s will be the era of democratisation of the Arab World. I wish they were right, but I think it is wishful thinking," he said.

How should the West respond to what is taking place in the Arab World? Mr. Viorst advised patience and understanding.



Charles, Diana said to clash over son's future

LONDON (R) — Britain's Prince Charles has clashed with his estranged wife, Princess Diana, over his plans for their elder son, Prince William, to have a military career, the Daily Express reported Saturday. The newspaper, quoting unidentified royal sources, said the couple had a row when they met at St. James' Palace in London last month to discuss 11-year-old Prince William's future. Prince Charles revealed he wanted Prince William to join the Royal Navy and told Princess Diana he had discussed the issue with his own father, Prince Philip, husband of queen Elizabeth, who agreed it was the best course, said the newspaper. "The princess was upset because she wants the decision to be left with William," the Daily Express said. Prince Charles, a Royal Navy commander, believed a career in the services was the perfect grounding for Prince William as an heir to the throne. "He is understood to be concerned by his son's apparent lack of discipline and believes the navy would help mould him for his future role as king," said the newspaper. Prince Charles and Princess Diana formally separated in December, 1992, after 11 years of marriage. They have a second son, nine-year-old Prince Harry.

Ex-Bolivian president held in Brazil

SAO PAULO (R) — Former Bolivian President Luis Garcia Meza, wanted in Bolivia on charges of drug trafficking, was arrested by Brazilian police in Sao Paulo Friday, Brazilian television reported. Citing the federal police, O Globo TV said Mr. Garcia Meza and a close aide, Colonel Gualberto Rico, were seized at an apartment near Congonhas Airport. The Bolivian consulate in Sao Paulo said it had received no information about the reported arrest of Mr. Garcia Meza, who had been on the run from Bolivia since he was convicted of drug trafficking and sentenced in absence to 30 years in jail.

New battle breaks out around D-Day cafe

RENNES, France (R) — A new battle has broken out around the Pegasus Bridge Cafe, the first house in France to be liberated during the D-Day landings in World War II. Local authorities say they want to check the cafe's floors to ensure that allied veterans, returning for the 50th anniversary of the June 1944 landings, do not fall through them. They have suspended the cafe's licence pending an inspection by health and safety officers. But cafe owner, Arlette Pritchett-Gondre, patron of several veterans' associations, refuses to receive the officials. "My conscience is clear and I have no worries," a defiant Pritchett-Gondre, whose establishment at Benouville near Caen is a favourite haunt for returning veterans, said. "This house has always been kept in perfect repair and there is no risk of accidents," she said in a telephone interview. She was a child in the house during the World War II Normandy battles and helped to care for the wounded. The office of the local prefect (government representative) insisted that the cafe was state property and that authorities were entitled to inspect it. The small cafe is listed as a historic monument, "after risking their lives to free French territory, it would be unfortunate for one of these glorious veterans to be a victim of an accident because the floorboards were in poor condition," said Kleber Arhoul, an aide to the prefect. Ms. Pritchett-Gondre lost an earlier crusade to save the nearby Pegasus Bridge, where the first British paratroopers landed at the start of the allied assault. The steel lift bridge was removed in November despite her attempts to keep it until the 50th anniversary of the June 6 landing. Officials said it was dismantled for safety reasons and to allow bigger ships to enter the port of Caen.

Emerging Yeltsin diplomacy gears up for Mideast

MOSCOW (R) — President Boris Yeltsin, pushing Russia's thrusting new diplomacy into higher gear, named a top diplomat as his envoy on the Middle East crisis on Friday and sent his foreign minister on a peace mission to the region. Mr. Yeltsin, following on Russia's new assertive diplomacy in former Yugoslavia, appointed the head of the foreign ministry's Middle East Department, Viktor Posavalyuk, as his special envoy on the region.

Presidential envoys are usually appointed to handle matters crucially important to Russian interests. They enjoy wide authority and close ties with the president.

With Russia, which had been playing a minor role on the world stage, seeking to reenter the Middle East diplomatic scene, Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev set off for Tunisia and Israel.

"There is concern over the situation in the Middle East. Not a single day should be lost," Foreign Ministry spokesman Gennady Karasov told a news briefing.

Mr. Kozyrev pressed Israel to accept an international presence to protect Palestinians and conveyed a special message from Mr. Yeltsin.

After meeting Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and Foreign Minister Shimon Peres, he was expected to meet Palestine Liberation Organisation Chairman Yasser Arafat in Tunis.

Mr. Karasov made no secret of Russia's desire to play a role in the region similar to its assertive Bosnian diplomacy last month.

"We should undertake dramatic intervention to pre-



Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat shakes hands with Russian Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev in Tunis late Friday (AFP photo)

vent the situation (in the Middle East) from worsening," he said.

"We hope our presence will be given serious consideration. We hope the visit of Russian Foreign Minister Kozyrev will provide a positive impulse."

Mr. Yeltsin's envoy on the Yugoslav crisis, Vitaly Churkin, brokered Moscow's diplomatic triumph in Bosnia, providing the Serbs a face-saving solution with a weapons pullout deal backed by an offer of Russian peacekeepers.

In the Middle East, Moscow has proposed a new peace conference along the lines of the historic Madrid forum in 1991 to get stalled Israeli-Arab peace talks back on track.

Moscow was a traditional power in the Middle East in the Soviet days, but it especially close ties with Iraq and Syria.

Now, it hopes to raise its international profile by securing a long-term diplomatic presence in the Middle East.

But Israel, which has traditionally seen Russia as pro-Arab, is suspicious of Russian intentions in the region and firmly rejects the idea of a new peace conference.

Nationalist gains in December's Russian elections have produced a more assertive mood in Moscow.

The government, parliament and the military have tossed aside their differences and united to rebuff Russia's influence in the former Soviet Union and the world.

Mr. Kozyrev made this clear in an article published in the daily Izvestia newspaper on Friday.

"Russia is doomed to be a great power," he said. "A dangerous and aggressive superpower and a communist or nationalist rule over peaceful and flourishing under democratic rule — but still a great power."

"This means Russia can be only be treated as an equal and not as a junior partner."

Three months after the closure, the diet of many Palestinian families, especially those in refugee camps, consisted of bread, lentils and rice. Today, diets and the standard of living, according to Dr. Roy are far more reduced.

Dr. Roy reported that economic, social, political and institutional disintegration was occurring throughout the Gaza Strip, including the basic social institutions of family, home, and community. "Parents can no longer control their children. They can no longer keep them in school. The sons of the intifada, now 15-25 years old have no defined order or leadership." She said that 200,000 Gazans between the ages of 10 and 20 fall into that category. Comparing her recent find-

ings to a trip she had taken a year earlier, Dr. Roy remarked how there were now "many more donkeys and far fewer cars," an indication that Gazans "can no longer afford to maintain a car." Those who do drive can into Israel can expect to earn at least \$50 a day, but those with donkeys, in contrast have an earning potential of about \$11, Dr. Roy said.

Questioned about the U.S. role in alleviating conditions in the territories, Dr. Roy said although money, projects and assistance are important, the crucial issue is democracy. She called on the U.S. government to apply "real pressure" on the PLO to be truly democratic.

"Part of that pressure should be to enfranchise people to allow alternative structures and institutions to develop... to create a pluralistic system, fair elections," she concluded.

Gaza analyst urges interim peace-keepers

WASHINGTON (USIA) — An international peacekeeping presence in Gaza is greatly needed and would be welcomed by Palestinians throughout the territories, a noted Middle East analyst told a Middle East Eastern Studies audience Thursday.

"Gaza is a place rife with insecurity, and... increasing lawlessness," said Dr. Sara Roy, a visiting scholar at the Centre for Middle Eastern Studies at Harvard University.

Dr. Roy, a native Gazan and the author of a forthcoming book on the Gaza Strip, revisited the occupied territories in January. She argued that an interim international peacekeeping presence "would bring Palestinians some sense of security, some sense of order... (they) have been crying for some sort of an international peacekeeping

presence to safeguard their security for a long time."

Dr. Roy pointed out that the Declaration of Principles brought "temporary excitement and tremendous expectations to Palestinians in Gaza" and raised expectations on such issues as the Israeli release of political prisoners, the lifting of the curfew, and the reopening of schools. However, the Hebron massacre "tragically underscored the sense of abandonment, vulnerability and disconnection" of the Palestinians, hence the need for an international security presence.

Economic hardships meanwhile have mounted. Prior to March 1993 and Israel's closing of borders, 70 per cent of the 140,000 Palestinian labour force worked inside Israel proper, she noted. "In Janu-

